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The Mario Bros. are back, and their latest platforming adventure promises to be pure gold. Get the scoop on New Super Mario Bros. 2 for Nintendo 3DS.

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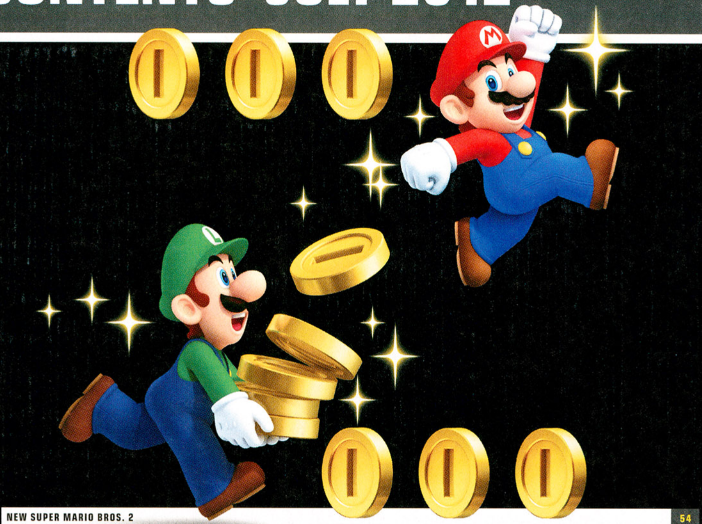
C'mon, Grab Your Friends 70

Get ready to go to a very distant land. We have a look at the first screens of WayForward's upcoming N3DS and DS game, Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!

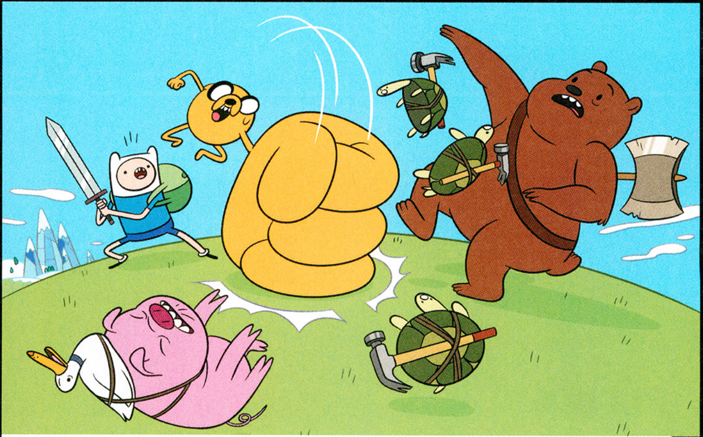


NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2 54

DESTINATION:

1987

DESTINATION: 1987 60



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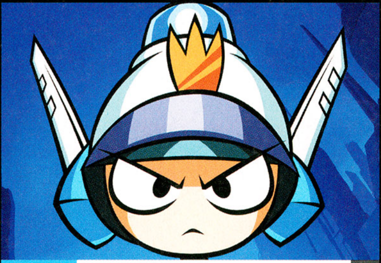

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All for one, and one for all!

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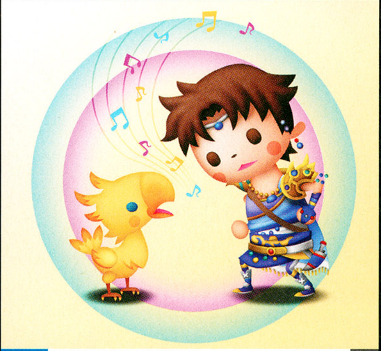

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
GBA = GAME BOY ADVANCE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
Wii U = Wii U
WW = WiiWARE

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Pulse

A Lot to Like

Chris Slate

E3 didn't answer all of our questions about the Wii U console, but if you ask me, there was still a heck of a lot to like at the show. Sure, I would love to have gotten a glimpse of the Wii U games that studios such as Retro and Monolith are cooking up, but on the bright side, those titles are still on the way. It's easy to get hung up on the stuff we didn't get to see and overlook all of the amazing stuff that we *did* see, such as the first all-new Mario title to release alongside a system since Super Mario 64 launched with the N64; a gorgeous new Rayman side-scroller that, in some ways, seems even better than the new Mario game; arguably the most interesting and innovative survival-horror game in years; both white and black versions of the Wii U hardware; an optional controller that will rock at core games with traditional controls; four-player Pikmin; a bevy of built-in social features; top-tier M-rated titles; day-and-date digital downloads of retail games; an exclusive open-world LEGO game that actually looks really cool; Nintendo titles with honest-to-goodness HD graphics; and a launch lineup that is shaping up to be one of the best in Nintendo's history.

So yeah, there's still a lot that we don't know about Wii U, but if you ask me, we know enough—who do I give my money to?

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

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The long-awaited sequel is finally here—and only Nintendo 3DS has it! PG. 42
Future

V279 JUNE 2012

This is The Hoff here, ready to help you beat the summer heat by replying to your letters and emails! I've also got another special letter request: Now that the Wii U console has been fully unveiled, how would you like to see developers use the system's unique features? Send your responses to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

New for U

I must say, I am very happy about the fact that Nintendo is putting Wii U out on the market supported by third-party games like Assassin's Creed III and Darksiders II. I have always heard from my friends that they're great games, but I'm a huge Nintendo fan and don't own other consoles besides Wii. I think that this was a smart move made by Nintendo and I hope they continue to get popular games like that on Wii U. **—ZELDAFANBOY**

An Island Unto Itself

As I was reading your Ultimate Super Mario feature [in Vol. 278], I agreed with almost everything, and I'm really glad Super Mario Galaxy won. But I noticed that Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island wasn't even mentioned! I really like that game and I think it deserves at least spot 14 over The Lost Levels. Do you guys dislike the game? **—LUCAS THE NINJA**

Yoshi's Island is awesome! Despite sporting the Super Mario name, though, the game is different enough that for that article we considered it part of its own series instead of grouping it with games in which Mario is the star. Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3 was omitted for the same reason.

Royal Mess

If Peach is a princess, then who is the king? The queen? It seems like Peach runs the kingdom. Does Peach have parents? If so, where are they? This one question has been haunting me ever since I started playing Mario games. If Mario and Peach got married, would Mario be a king or a prince? Oh, no! Could Bowser be Peach's father?!

—THORNDOG

Good questions. We've never seen Peach do much governing, so we suspect the chancellor does all the work. As for the last inquiry, we can only imagine Princess Peach saying, "No. No. It's not true. That's impossible! *Nooooooo!*"

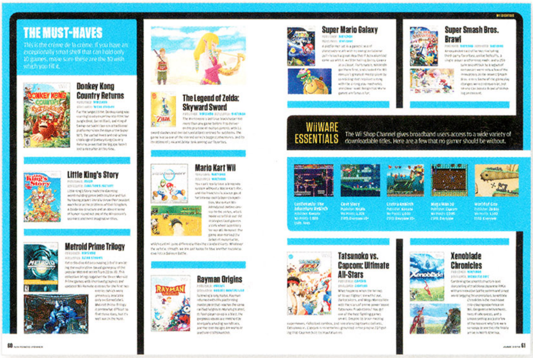
Offer Expires While You Wait

Recently I went to this little shop that carries used video games and found this amazing deal for a copy of Super Mario Kart in its original box. Everything is in mint condition, and there was even this little ad for Nintendo Power alongside the game manual. It brought back so many nostalgic memories of childhood and of when I dreamed of a subscription (which I never got until I paid for it myself) because almost every game had these ads in them. Do you think if I sent in this application for a subscription I would receive the promised free Super NES Player's Guide?

—JESS M.

Um...no.

Thank you so much for including my favorite game of all time, Donkey Kong Country Returns, at the top of your Wii Essentials list. The game completely deserves it! On a different note, I wish you guys had included Super Paper Mario somewhere on the list. **—VISIBLECC1**


THE MUST-HAVES

This is the crème de la crème. If you have an exceptionally small shelf that can hold only 10 games, make sure these are the 10 with which you fill it.

Donkey Kong Country Returns

Little King's Story

Metroid Prime Trilogy

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

Mario Kart Wii

Rayman Origins

Super Mario Galaxy

Super Smash Bros. Brawl

WiiWARE ESSENTIALS

The Wii Shop Channel gives broadband users access to a wide variety of downloadable titles. Here are a few that no gamer should be without.

Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars

Xenoblade Chronicles

Only in Japan?

I've been a faithful reader for around 10 years now, but this is the first time I've ever been compelled to write a letter to Pulse. I'm just completely dissatisfied with the fact that there are so many fantastic N3DS games that aren't reaching North American shores. Games like Fire Emblem, Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney, and Time Travelers have yet to receive North American release dates, but it was the promise of franchises like Fire Emblem and Ace Attorney that spurred my purchase of an N3DS in the first place. Will these games ever be localized?

—JAKE H.

Good news: Fire Emblem: Awakening has been announced for North America! As for Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney, a Japanese release date still isn't set, so it's a bit early to fret over that one.

Join the Club

I have noticed that you always call yourself various groups of video game characters. I specifically remember Vol. 276 said The Nikki Swapnote Fan Club. It says this at the top-right corner of page 8. I'm highly amused by that. **—JS**

Those eyes...those glasses... that coy wink...isn't everybody a member of The Nikki Swapnote Fan Club?

The Clone Wars

I've noticed for quite a while now that Sega seems to be copying Mario. In the new Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed the cars turn into boats and jets; come on—everybody knows Mario *just did that*. If I ever see Sega Smash Bros., I'm gonna flip. **—MALKIL**

It's true that Mario can be a pretty influential guy, but to be fair, the developers of Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed say their game was in the works before they ever saw Mario Kart 7. They were more than a little miffed that Mario beat them to the punch.

Dating Service

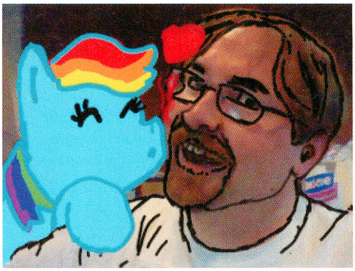
In your Game Forecast section you guys still have Animal Crossing and Paper Mario's release dates as TBA. But several weeks ago I visited my local game store and reserved both games, which I was told would be released (along with Luigi's Mansion 2) on August 2. You guys are slipping. **—NINTENDAVE**

This just goes to show that you can't believe everything you hear. Paper Mario: Sticker Star and Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon will be out in time for the holiday season, but Animal Crossing still has no release date. (We're pretty sure it's not August 2, though.)

Smooches All Around

Chris Hoffman is a brony! Nintendo Power is (if you'll pardon the overused joke) 20 percent cooler! I saw the image in the most recent issue of Nintendo Power, in Phil T.'s review of Colors! 3D. I hope you get a lot of happy letters about this. But if you get any angry letters, only print the ones that are so rage-induced (by brony haters) that they're funny. **—DOGMAN15**

Wow! We were not prepared for the deluge of mail that this screenshot created! For anyone wondering, this drawing comes purely from the stylus and mind of the whimsical Phil T. At least, that's my story, and I'm sticking to it.



DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Who do you think would win in a battle between Mario, Kirby, Link, and The Hoff? Remember, The Hoff isn't a fireball-throwing plumber, isn't capable of swallowing large objects, and doesn't wield the Master Sword.

—WILD ZASSE

The Hoff says: It's true; other than my ability to put up with Phil T. on a daily basis, I don't have many special powers. Most likely Kirby would devour me immediately while Mario would try using his fireballs on Link, who'd use his Fireshield Earrings from Skyward Sword to make himself fireproof. He'd be all, "Oh, no you don't, fool," and then he'd knock Mario into next week. But then Kirby would sneak up behind Link, transform into a bulldozer, and clobber him. Kirby would then spit me out, victory all but assured, when suddenly Chris Slate would descend from orbit and crash into Kirby with an earth-rending explosion, destroying them both and leaving me as the sole survivor.

My idea is a crossover of Metroid and The Legend of Zelda. For me, and I suspect a lot of other people, it would be a dream come true. **—SHERVIN BK**

What unlikely video game mashups would you like to see?

I'd like to see a Final Fantasy/ Dragon Quest crossover. I mean, seriously, they even did a crossover of Dragon Quest and Mario! Now that Square and Enix are one company, I'm even more surprised they haven't done it. **—CALVIN N.**

I think it would be cool to have a video game crossover in which Professor Layton would embark on a dangerous quest to teach Wario how to be a true English gentleman. You would play as Wario and have to quickly solve puzzles about polite conversation and table manners, WarioWare-style. Then, in a shocking midgame twist, Wario would turn the tables on the professor, who would be forced to escape Wario's evil prison of inappropriate doom with only his wits to rely on. **—THECHOSENHERO**

I would like to see Mario Kart mashed up with Super Smash Bros.—basically, I want Nintendo Kart! Link could ride Epona, Fox could fly low in an Arwing or drive the Landmaster, and the stages would have awesome possibilities! Think of Samus, Mario, and Link all racing through Hyrule Field or Skyloft. That would be really cool! **—STEVE G.**

The mashup of my dreams involves two of my favorite swordplay games—The Legend of Zelda and Fire Emblem. Link comes across Marth or Roy's homeland, and they fight side by side to defeat Ganon and the Dark Dragon. It would be grid-based like Fire Emblem, but with enemies and weapons from The Legend of Zelda. **—LINK'S UPRISING**

What if Dr. Eggman from the Sonic the Hedgehog series somehow found out how to revive Liquid Snake [from Metal Gear Solid]? Just think of how chaotic Solid Snake's last mission would be, teaming up with the Blue Blur in one final race to stop world destruction. (No guns for Shadow though, please.) **—WIIHUGGER**

What about Mario Paint vs. Epic Mickey? **—PLUTON FLY**

I think if Samus and Mega Man ever teamed up, it would produce an awesome crossover game! **—ERIC S.**

I have always wanted a mashup of Mario and Phoenix Wright! It would be so cool to see Mario, Luigi, and Bowser in court with Phoenix Wright. Mario would say, "I didn't do it" in an Italian accent, while Bowser gets arrested for attempted murder. It would be funny watching a Goomba bail Bowser out of prison! **—MUSCLER**

I've always thought about a Mario/ Final Fantasy crossover. You know, sort of like Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars taken up a few notches. **—EELEYE**

What if Konami and Capcom made a Metal Gear/Resident Evil crossover? It would be a mix of survival horror and stealth! The characters would be mashed up too! Barry Burton and The End for their mighty beards, Big Boss and Albert Wesker as the villains, and Chris and Solid Snake could be the main characters. **—KING SHRIEK**

I'd like to state the obvious: There should be a Mario and Call of Duty mashup. It could give "hardcore gamers" a chance to play a Mario game. **—THAT GAMER**

PLEASE WRITE US

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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NO: 81%

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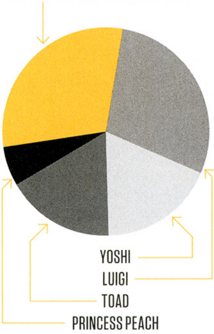
PAULINE



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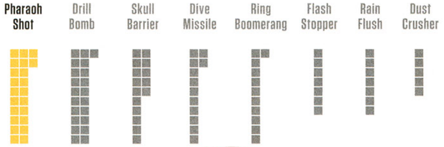

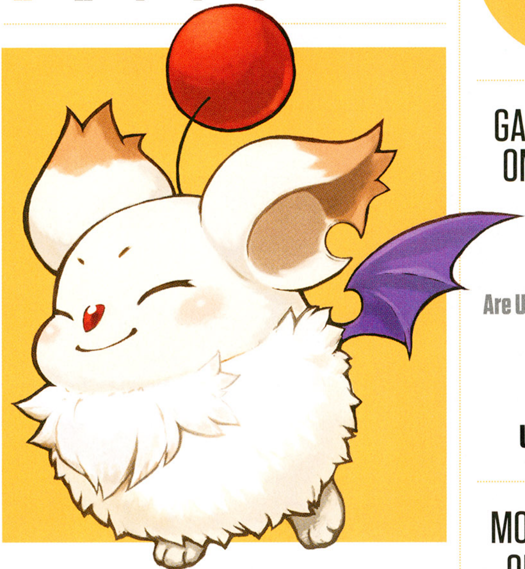

WHAT FINAL FANTASY CREATURES ARE CUTEST?

MOOGLES

Moogles 46%
Chocobos 43%
Cactuars 11%

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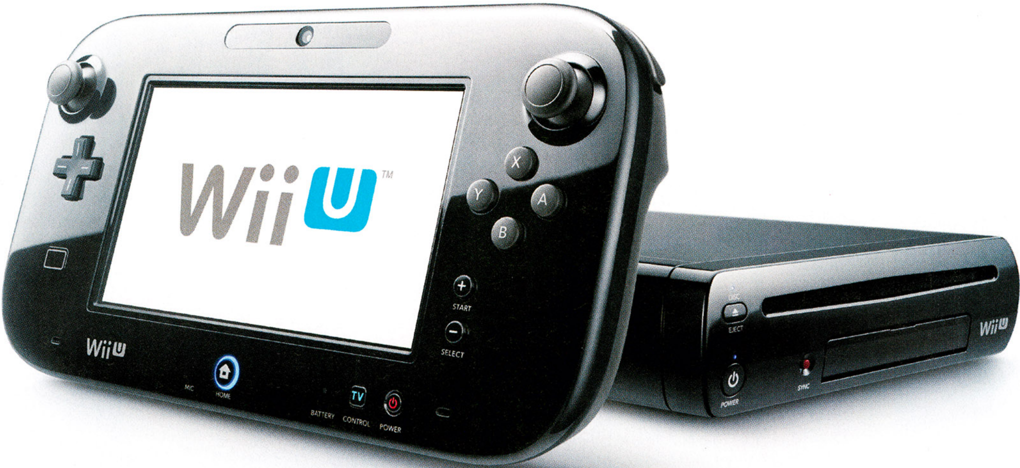


Wii U Comes Out to Play

Nintendo finally unveils more details on its new console and showcases the first round of games.

AFTER BEING SHROUDED in agonizing secrecy for months, the Wii U console had its full-fledged coming-out party at the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles. Nintendo debuted the final design for the system's innovative new controller (dubbed the Wii U GamePad), discussed the platform's unique online functionality, and announced more than 20 first- and third-party games to be released during the launch window this holiday season.

On the following pages, we break down the hardware in more detail, then highlight the 10 most exciting Wii U games we've sampled thus far. (Some of our choices may surprise you.) Of course, this is only scratching the surface. We'll have tons of Wii U coverage in the months to come, including in-depth previews and exclusive details on all of the system's most hotly anticipated titles. —**STEVE T.**

Wii U GamePad

1. ANALOG STICKS

The early prototype of the GamePad shown at last year's E3 featured Circle Pads similar to that on the Nintendo 3DS, but the final design replaces them with traditional analog sticks. Furthermore, each stick can be clicked by pressing straight down on it, allowing it to serve as an additional button.

2. TOUCH SCREEN

The big story when it comes to Wii U is the 6.2-inch, 16:9 aspect ratio LCD touch screen on the controller. It uses resistive touch (rather than capacitive touch like on most smart phones) to enable greater precision and the use of an included stylus.

3. CAMERA

The front-facing camera not only takes photos, but provides the system with video chat capabilities.

4. STEREO HEADPHONE JACK

Compatible with standard headphones, this built-in jack will be especially handy when using the GamePad without relying on the TV screen.

5. NEAR-FIELD COMMUNICATION

This allows the Wii U GamePad to communicate wirelessly with certain objects held above it. It's similar to the technology used by the Portal of Power for Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure.

6. STEREO SPEAKERS

Sound comes out of these.

7. MICROPHONE

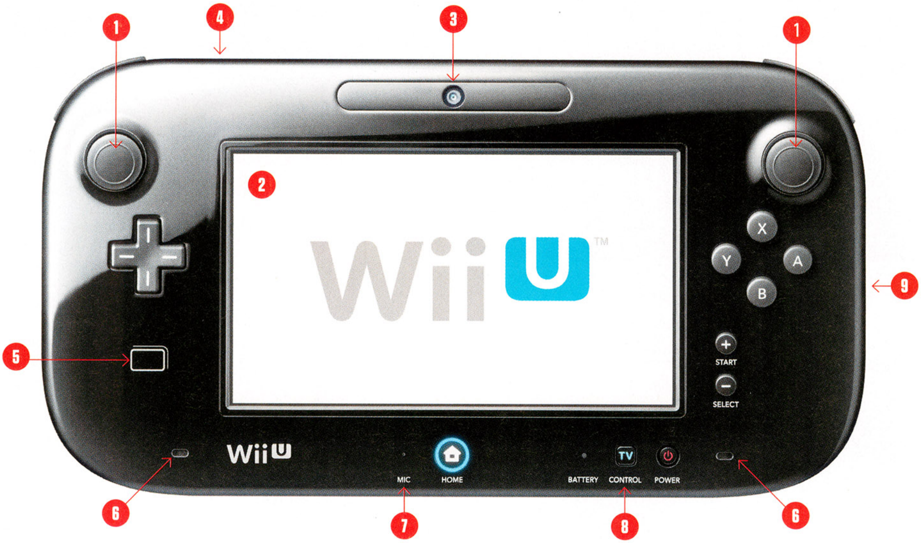
Sound goes into this.

8. TV CONTROL BUTTON

Using infrared communication, the controller can function as a universal TV remote.

9. MOTION CONTROL

An accelerometer, a gyroscope, and a geomagnetic sensor power the robust motion controls of the GamePad. The controller also boasts a built-in rumble feature.



MiiVERSE

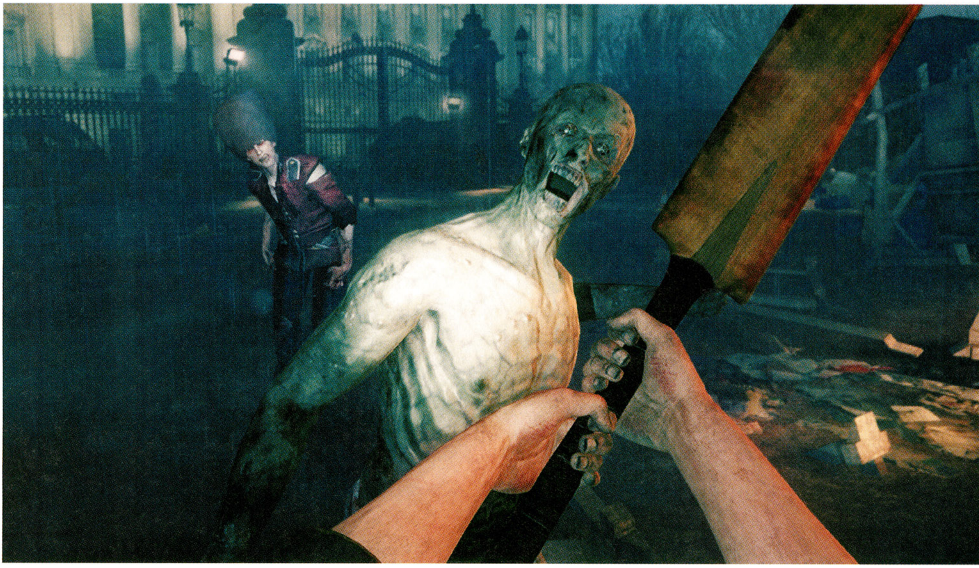
Miiverse allows you to connect to other players online from the moment you turn on the Wii U console. You can exchange comments, post screenshots, see what your friends are playing, and much more. Many games will also include integrated Miiverse content.

Wii U PRO CONTROLLER

If you'd feel more comfortable with a traditional controller in your hands, the sleek Wii U Pro Controller is the way to go. The system can support up to four Pro Controllers at once.

VIDEO SERVICES

Numerous streaming entertainment options—including Netflix, Amazon Instant Video, YouTube, and Hulu—are coming to Wii U. They'll be designed to take advantage of the screen on the Wii U GamePad.

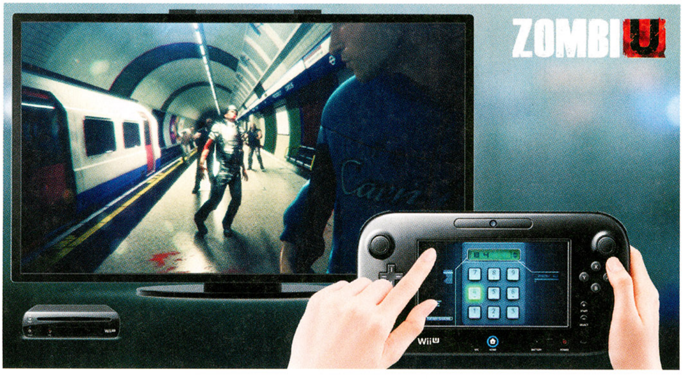


ZombiU

1

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTPELLIER

OF ALL THE Wii U games we've sampled thus far, we're most excited about ZombiU. It's one of two provocative offerings from the talented folks at Ubisoft Montpellier (the other, coincidentally, is on the opposite page). This Wii U exclusive drops players in the middle of a post-apocalyptic London, where a recent outbreak has turned most of the population into mindless, flesh-eating monstrosities. That may not be a particularly original theme these days, but this is otherwise a pretty daring effort. Because while the rest of the first-person genre aspires to grow ever bigger and louder—like a ceaseless barrage of Michael Bay flicks—ZombiU promises honest-to-goodness survival-horror the likes of which we feared extinct.



That means ammunition and other necessities are in short supply, of course, plus the game employs a number of bold new ideas to build an uncommonly potent sense of tension. As you wield the Wii U GamePad to rummage for provisions, pick locks, or remove items from your backpack, for instance, events continue to unfold on the television, where the camera switches to a third person-perspective that shows any zombies bearing down on your position. Even more intense: a single bite spells the end for your onscreen persona. At that point you'll take control of a different survivor and you'll need to track down your previous, now-infected character to recover your equipment.

If only Ubisoft would change that title—preferably to something that doesn't sound like a SyFy-network movie starring Jaleel White.

—STEVE T.

Rayman Legends

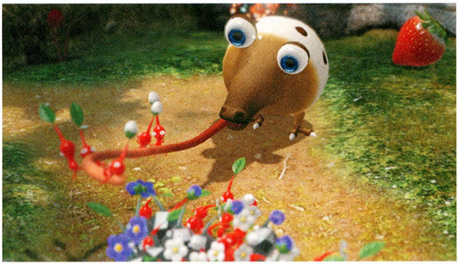
2

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTPELLIER

ONE OF LAST year's most joyful (and tragically underappreciated) video game experiences was Rayman Origins, so we couldn't be happier that Ubisoft's limbless wonder is back so soon for another round of gorgeously hand-drawn 2D platforming. And with Rayman Legends, creator Michel Ancel and his team have accomplished what we would have thought impossible: saturating the screen with even more detail, color, and charm to give us something that surpasses the visual splendor of its predecessor (and by a considerable margin, at that).

Legends also expands on the franchise's multiplayer hijinks. Up to four players can run through the levels via Wii Remotes or Wii U Pro Controllers while a fifth uses the Wii U GamePad to lend assistance as airborne sidekick Murfy. And unlike the helper roles in most games, playing with Murfy is actually a heck of a lot of fun. He performs all sorts of different functions, from firing slingshots at potbellied dragons to rotating spike-filled labyrinths so Rayman and company can make it through unharmed. Nobody *has* to play as Murfy, though; he's required only for a specially designed set of co-op levels. The main campaign can be completed with or without him.

The one piece of bad news? Ubisoft can't say for certain whether Rayman Legends will be ready by the end of this year. **—STEVE T.**



Pikmin 3

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** **DEVELOPER:** **NINTENDO**

3

AT LONG LAST, a new installment in Shigeru Miyamoto's unique action-strategy series is nearly a reality. Pikmin 3 lets you once again take control of a variety of adorably diminutive Pikmin creatures and command them to do your bidding—collecting items, fighting enemies, building bridges, obliterating obstacles, and more. While familiar play mechanics will greet you like an old friend, there's little doubt that this will be the series's best entry thanks to additions like fantastic HD graphics and a touch-controlled map on the Wii U GamePad. (You can also play using the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers.) Furthermore, this installment introduces Rock Pikmin, which can be used to shatter crystal barriers and smash through the carapaces of armored foes. But where is series protagonist Captain Olimar? Although the game features four playable characters, he isn't one of them, leaving us to ponder the beloved captain's fate. —**CHRIS H.**

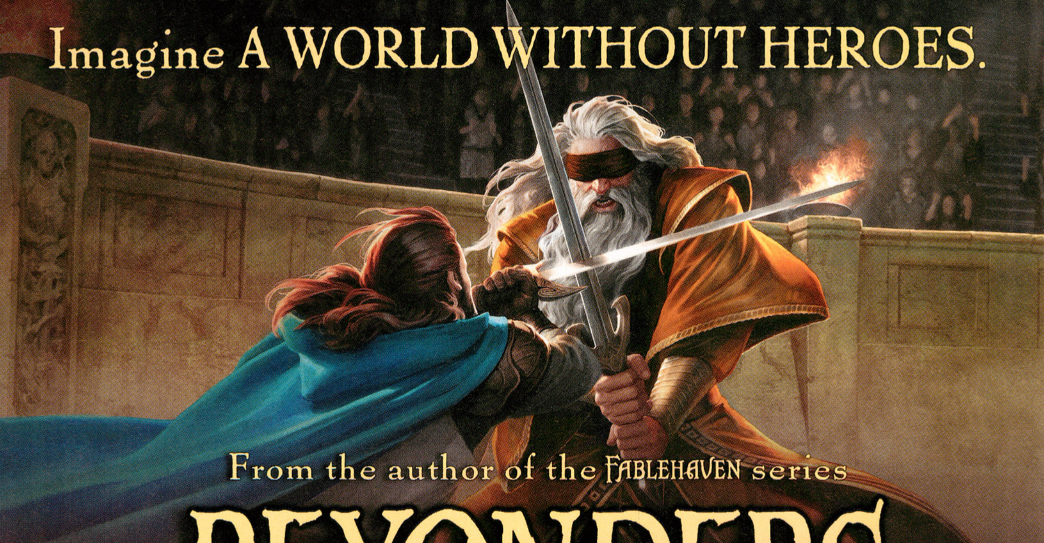
Assassin's Creed III

4

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** **DEVELOPER:** **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER**

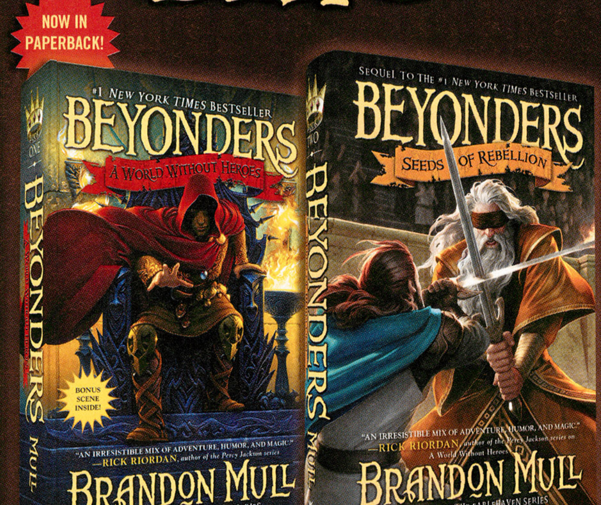
THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED Assassin's Creed series makes its Nintendo-console debut with part three, which is shaping up to be the most impressive chapter to date. As previously reported, the game takes place around the time of the American Revolution, and players will seek out targets both on the frontier and in the cities of Boston and New York. On top of that, Ubisoft recently revealed a brand-new element: naval battles. We had a chance to play through one, taking the helm of a ship to sink two enemy vessels and board another. It was an incredible spectacle and provided a nice change of pace from the franchise's usual activities. —**STEVE T.**

Imagine a world without Mario,
Donkey Kong, or Link.
Imagine A WORLD WITHOUT HEROES.



From the author of the FABLEHAVEN series

BEYONDERS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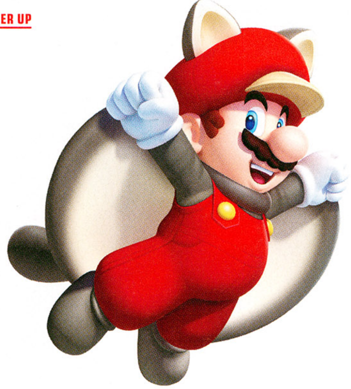
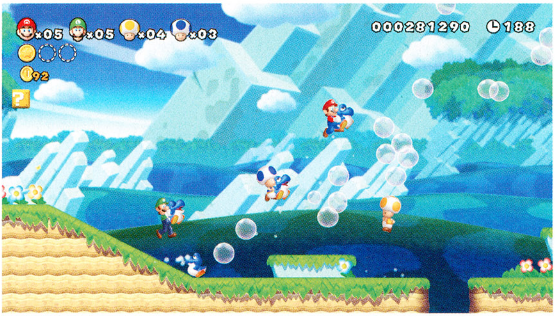
ALADDIN

Mario, Donkey Kong, and Link ™ Nintendo



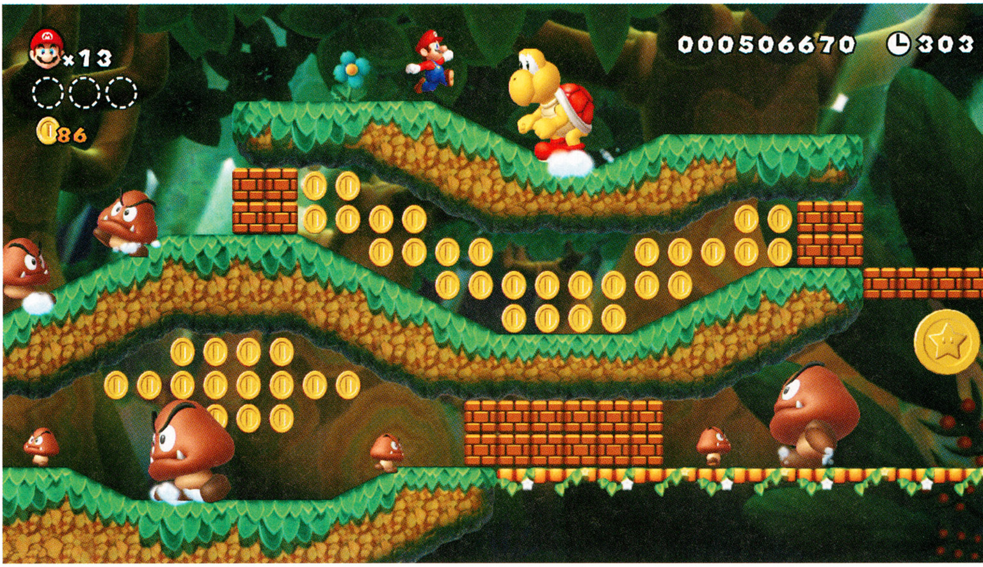


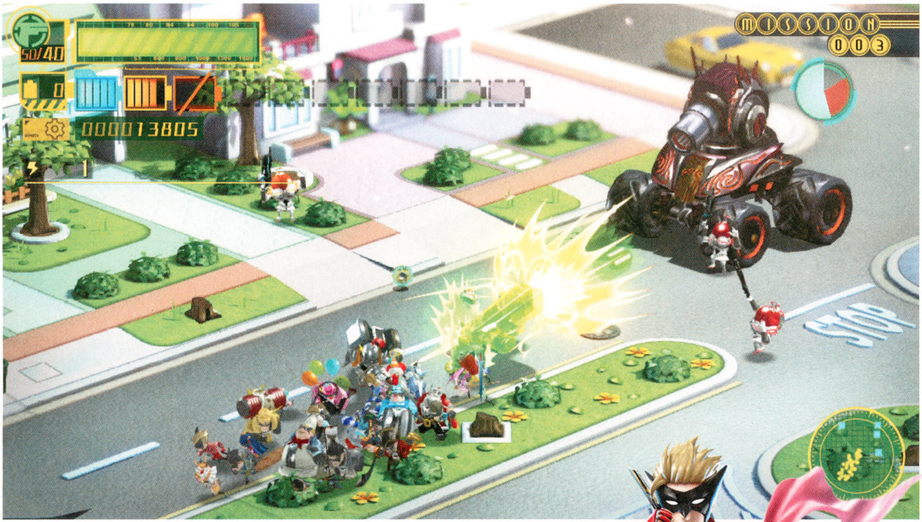
New Super Mario Bros. U

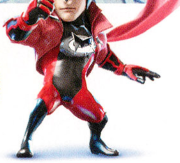
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** **DEVELOPER:** **NINTENDO**

5

NO NINTENDO CONSOLE is complete without a Mario platformer. It's hard to beat the mustachioed one's world-renowned formula of magic 'shrooms, gold coins, moving platforms, tricky jumps, hidden vines, and warp pipes. Only a handful of levels were on display at E3, but the Mario magic was readily apparent: a lush forested area gave us a chance to soar, glide, and cling to walls using Mario's new flying-squirrel suit, and in a world of giant mushroom platforms we floated past dangerous Piranha Plants with an assist from an inflating pink baby Yoshi. An icy level—featuring slippery footing and tricky, rotating, star-shaped platforms—presented additional challenges. Up to four players (controlling Mario, Luigi, Toad, or a Mii) can simultaneously participate in the action, plus an additional player can lend a hand in Boost mode. Controlled via the touch screen on the Wii U GamePad, Boost mode allows you to aid others by creating platforms and stunning enemies. The game also takes advantage of the Wii U console's Miiverse functionality; through an online-enabled in-game message system, you'll be able to share your accomplishments, comments, and frustrations with other players. —**CHRIS H.**







Project P-100* 6

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO **DEVELOPER:** PLATINUM GAMES

FROM THE FERTILE imagination of Hideki Kamiya (creator of Devil May Cry, Viewtiful Joe, and Okami) comes perhaps the *weirdest* game being prepped for the Wii U launch window. And we mean that in the most complimentary way possible. The tentatively titled Project P-100 puts you in the shoes of Earth's would-be savior (who bears more than a passing resemblance to Joe), tasked with defending the planet against alien invaders. He can't go it alone, though; you must assemble a squad of heroes from everyday citizens like schoolteachers and firefighters. You'll then morph your followers into all sorts of supersized objects, whether it's a fist to pummel your foes, or what looks like a huge Jell-O mold to defend yourself from attacks. The greater your group's numbers, the more potent their transformations are. It's unlike anything we've played before, and we can't wait to dig deeper. —**STEVE T.**

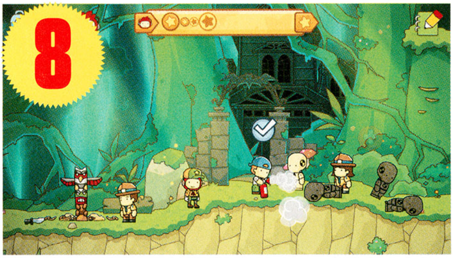
Batman: Arkham City–Armored Edition 7

PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER:** WB GAMES MONTREAL

WE ALREADY KNEW that Batman: Arkham City was going to be awesome. It is, after all, based on last year's multiplatform hit, which was a huge success thanks to its robust combat system, cool gadgets, massive world, and open-ended gameplay that allows players to use brains as well as brawn. But this Armored Edition of the game (named after the new armor that Batman and Catwoman wear) promises to take the immersion factor to new heights thanks to several exclusive extra features. A powered-up Battle Armored Tech attack mode will let you lay the hurt on thugs like never before, while the Wii U GamePad acts as your personal Batcomputer, providing you with mission objectives, maps, gadget access, and more. You'll also use the GamePad to interact with the world in a variety of ways, such as moving it around to scan environments for clues and tilting it to guide remote-controlled Batarangs. —**CHRIS H.**

*WORKING TITLE

Scribblenauts Unlimited



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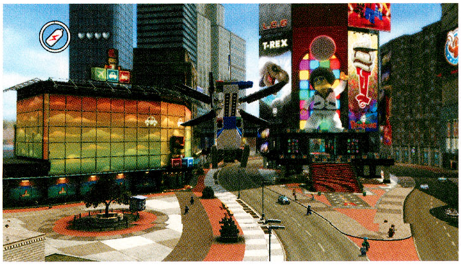
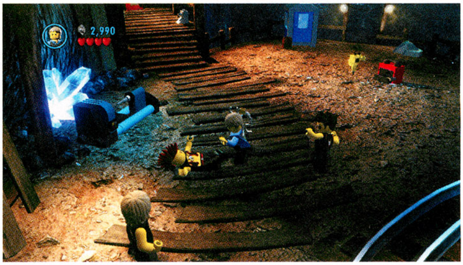
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT** **DEVELOPER:** **5TH CELL**

LIKE PREVIOUS GAMES in the series, Scribblenauts Unlimited lets you conjure up pretty much anything that exists in the real world by using combinations of nouns and adjectives. But now you can also create things that *don't* exist in the real world. Want to drive a giant taco that has pizzas for wheels? Or fly around on a propeller-equipped yak? You can do so by combining objects to invent anything you want, then modify your creation's behavior in countless ways. Other highlights include larger levels and a multiplayer component. A version of the game is headed to the Nintendo 3DS handheld, as well. —**CHRIS H.**





LEGO City: Undercover

9

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** **DEVELOPER:** **TT GAMES**

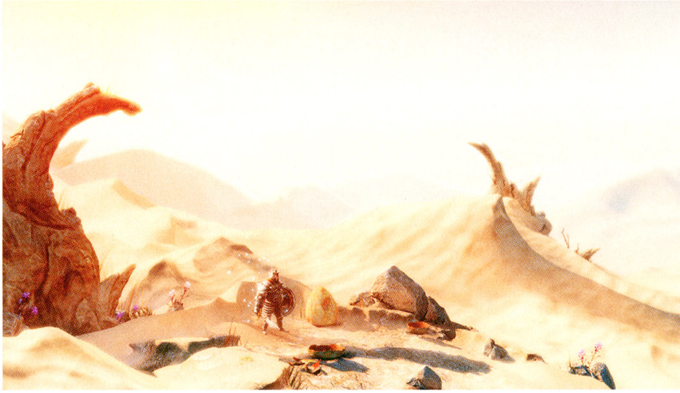
THIS Wii U exclusive from the LEGO masters at TT Games melds the brand's tried-and-true gameplay formula with a lighthearted crime motif and open-world structure. It also makes extensive use of the unique functionality of the Wii U GamePad. Your dispatcher issues instructions through the controller's speaker, for example, and the touch screen pulls double duty as a convenient map of the city as well as an X-ray scanner to locate hidden suspects. In our early glimpse, LEGO City showcased a fantastic sense of humor highlighted by suave-yet-occasionally-hapless hero Chase McCain. —**STEVE T.**

Trine 2: Director's Cut

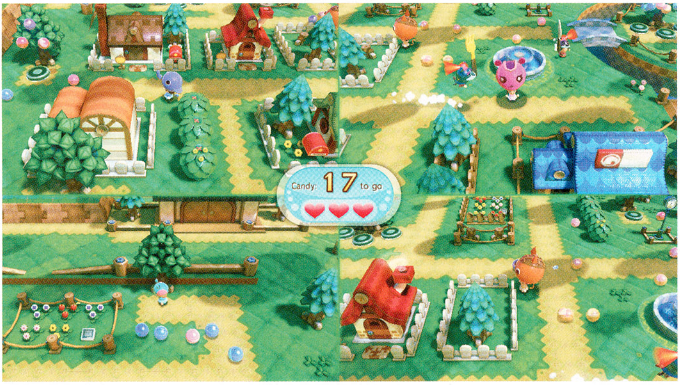
PUBLISHER: **FROZENBYTE** **DEVELOPER:** **FROZENBYTE**

10

UNLIKE THE OTHER Wii U games on this list, Trine 2: Director's Cut is scheduled to be a download-only title. But that doesn't mean it's any less impressive; on the contrary, the graphics are amazing and the 2D gameplay is a blast. Taking control of Amadeus the Wizard, Zoya the Thief, and Pontius the Knight, you'll switch between heroes to fight enemies and solve puzzles in an enchanting fantasy world. Though Trine 2 has already been released on competing consoles, this version includes expanded content: more levels, new character abilities, enhanced controls, a four-player party mode, and more. —**CHRIS H.**



Also On the Way...



Nintendo Land

DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE the capabilities of the Wii U GamePad in a variety of ways, Nintendo Land is a virtual theme park with attractions inspired by your favorite Nintendo franchises, including The Legend of Zelda, F-Zero, Luigi's Mansion, Donkey Kong, and Animal Crossing. There will be 12 attractions in all—each featuring a different type of gameplay—and Nintendo representatives promise that each one will provide a surprisingly deep experience. We'll bring you more details about all of the attractions in upcoming issues.

Mass Effect 3

Darksiders II

Tank! Tank! Tank!

Tekken Tag Tournament 2*

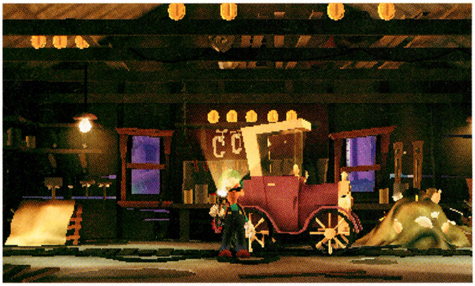
Wii Fit U

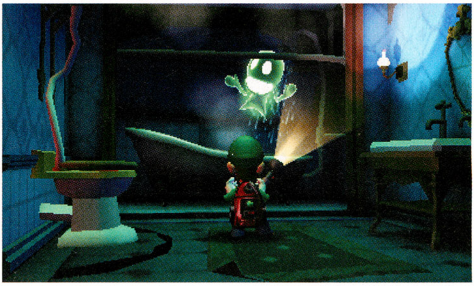
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge

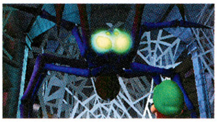
Stage 1
Pause
Life
Pepper
Score 00000820

Game & Wario*

*WORKING TITLE







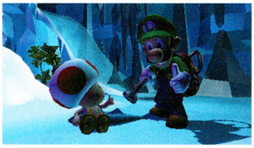
Good Moon Rising

Nintendo shines a light on the long-awaited Luigi's Mansion sequel for Nintendo 3DS.

IT'S BEEN QUITE a while since the announcement of Luigi's Mansion 2 for the Nintendo 3DS handheld, but at long last there's some good news for fans of Mario's green-garbed bro. The game finally has a release timeframe (this holiday season), as well as a new title—Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon.

In his latest solo adventure, Luigi must venture into a variety of haunted locales to collect the pieces of an artifact known as the Dark Moon. To do so, he'll have to battle loads of nefarious ghosts (using his flashlight and his vacuumlike Poltergust 5000 ghost-catching equipment) and overcome an assortment of tricky puzzles.

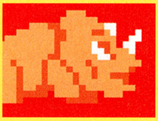
In the first location Luigi visits, Ghostly Manor, you'll have to retrieve keys by blowing them from ceiling fans, dodge attacks from animated suits of armor, discover treasure chests hidden behind tapestries, and learn to activate machinery using Luigi's new Stroboscope attachment. There's even a showdown in the bathroom with a showering ghost! Things get all the more varied when you visit other haunted locales, which include the Old Clockworks (a sandy abandoned factory where you'll have to yank pulleys, solve clock-based puzzles, and battle phantoms that hide underground) and the Secret Lab (an icy chalet that comes complete with an undead bearskin rug and a haunted hockey rink).



New play mechanics—such as wielding a flashlight strobe that stuns ghosts and a rainbow beam that reveals secrets—and humorously detailed animations also await any gamers brave enough to follow Luigi into the creepy abodes. —**CHRIS H.**

A WINNER IS...

Nintendo games with high-definition graphics.



DODONGO DISLIKES...

Boneheads who compare ZombiU to Red Steel.

Blocky Baggins

Build your faux-plastic fantasy in LEGO The Lord of the Rings: The Video Game.

ON THE HEELS of a pair of Harry Potter games, the LEGO series turns its attention to that other huge fantasy film series with LEGO The Lord of the Rings: The Video Game for Wii, N3DS, and DS. More than 80 characters are playable in a co-op romp that looks and plays like past LEGO action entries, albeit with the special powers, thrilling showdowns, and iconic Middle-earth settings from the film and book trilogy. The fantastical battles will be waged later this year. —**ANDREW H.**

STAR POWER

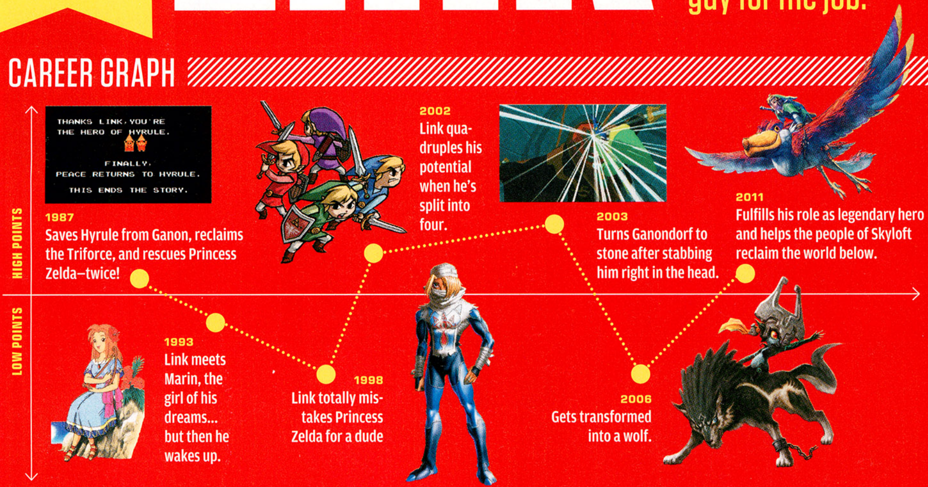
A closer look at the characters we love

Link

FIRST APPEARANCE:
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
NES, 1987

He's heroic. He's courageous. When there's a realm to be saved and a princess to be rescued, Link is the guy for the job.

CAREER GRAPH



THANKS LINK, YOU'RE THE HERO OF HYRULE.

FINALLY, PEACE RETURNS TO HYRULE.

THIS ENDS THE STORY.

1987
Saves Hyrule from Ganon, reclaims the Triforce, and rescues Princess Zelda—twice!

1993
Link meets Marin, the girl of his dreams... but then he wakes up.

1998
Link totally mistakes Princess Zelda for a dude

2002
Link quadruples his potential when he's split into four.

2003
Turns Ganondorf to stone after stabbing him right in the head.

2006
Gets transformed into a wolf.

2011
Fulfills his role as legendary hero and helps the people of Skyloft reclaim the world below.

OUR FAVORITE LINK GAMES

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

SUPER NES, 1992
Out of all of the 2D Legend of Zelda games, A Link to the Past is our favorite. This title provided a much richer Hyrule for Link to explore, complete with a compelling narrative, cool new items (such as the Hookshot), and the ever-popular Light and Dark worlds.

Jump
Put Away
3902

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

GAMECUBE, 2003
Games don't get much more charming than The Wind Waker. But don't be fooled; beneath the cute cel-shaded veneer, The Wind Waker has some of the most engrossing gameplay in the Zelda series. This time around, Link's adventure begins when his sister gets kidnapped.

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D

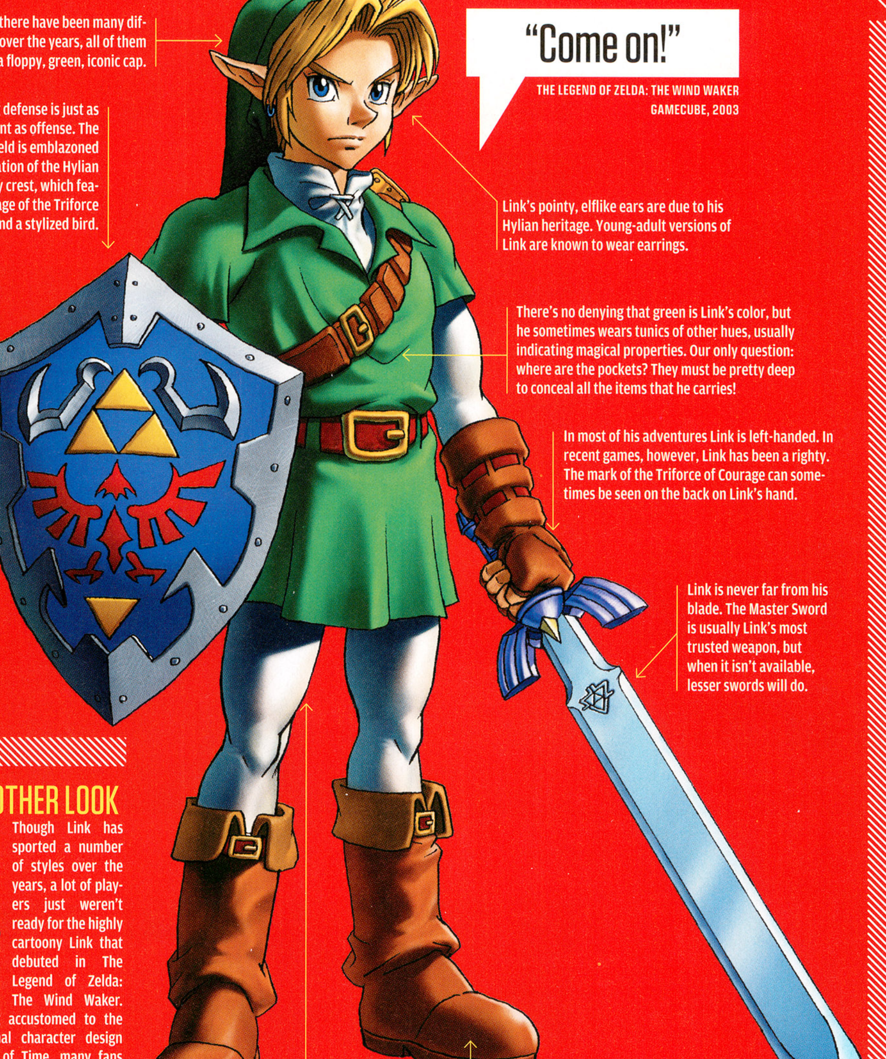
NINTENDO 3DS, 2011
The original Ocarina of Time on Nintendo 64 redefined the Zelda series and taught the world what a modern adventure game should be. The version for the Nintendo 3DS handheld is even better. While retaining the same great gameplay and story, it adds enhanced graphics, better controls, and new modes.

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

Wii, 2011
Despite being as silent as ever, Link has an abundance of personality in Skyward Sword. The game lets players learn about his school, his friends, and, most importantly, his relationship with Zelda. The game also benefits from a terrific story, outstanding visuals, and immersive new controls.

"Come on!"

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
GAMECUBE, 2003



Even though there have been many different Links over the years, all of them have donned a floppy, green, iconic cap.

A strong defense is just as important as offense. The Hylian Shield is emblazoned with a variation of the Hylian Royal Family crest, which features an image of the Triforce and a stylized bird.

Link's pointy, elflike ears are due to his Hylian heritage. Young-adult versions of Link are known to wear earrings.

There's no denying that green is Link's color, but he sometimes wears tunics of other hues, usually indicating magical properties. Our only question: where are the pockets? They must be pretty deep to conceal all the items that he carries!

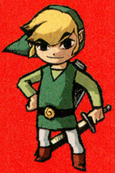
In most of his adventures Link is left-handed. In recent games, however, Link has been a righty. The mark of the Triforce of Courage can sometimes be seen on the back on Link's hand.

Link is never far from his blade. The Master Sword is usually Link's most trusted weapon, but when it isn't available, lesser swords will do.

Pants are entirely optional for Link, especially when he's a younger lad.

You don't want to go adventuring without a sturdy pair of boots. Aside from his default footwear, Link is known to wear Iron Boots (to remain steady in wind and water), Hover Boots (which allow him to briefly walk on air), and Pegasus Boots (for fast movement).

LINK'S OTHER LOOK



Though Link has sported a number of styles over the years, a lot of players just weren't ready for the highly cartoony Link that debuted in The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker. After growing accustomed to the more-traditional character design from Ocarina of Time, many fans were whipped into a frenzied rage by the big-headed, stubby-limbed version of Hyrule's hero. Fortunately, the controversy died down once the game came out and players discovered that Toon Link (as he's come to be known) could be just as awesome as regular Link. He's since become an accepted and beloved part of the Zelda universe.

NEW SKYLANDER!

Bring the Sting

Every month, we're exclusively revealing a new character from Skylanders Giants, which is heading to Wii, Nintendo 3DS, and Wii U later this year. Up next: Swarm.

Swarm

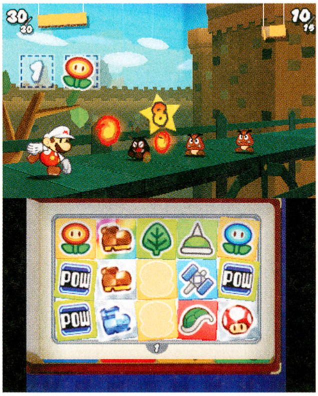
Element: Air

Bio: Swarm was once a prince from a proud race of mysterious insect warriors that had built their entire civilization inside a giant honeycombed pyramid. Growing up as one of the 9,000 members of the royal family, he was never permitted to leave the hive. But unlike his brethren, there was a magical quality to Swarm that caused him to grow much larger than the rest of his kind. No longer able to fit amongst the rest of his colony, the young prince broke the long standing tradition and stepped out into the open world—where his size and strength would be put to good use in the legendary battle between the Giants and the Arkeyans.

Now with More Attitude

Relive a revolutionary era with WWE '13 for Wii.

AN UPDATED CHARACTER roster, loads of hard-hitting moves, enhanced visuals, fresh storylines—those are the things players expect when THQ unveils each installment of its popular WWE video game franchise. But WWE '13 for Wii brings something else to the table: an emphasis on WWE's beloved "Attitude Era" of the late 1990s. Stars from that period—such as Stone Cold Steve Austin, the Undertaker, and Mankind feature heavily—and a campaign mode focuses on those performers, as well. The game also includes plenty of current-day WWE personalities (it should be the series's largest roster yet), with whom you can perform new jaw-dropping stunts, such as driving your opponent through a barricade or causing the ring to collapse. WWE '13 is scheduled for a late October release. —**CHRIS H.**



Stick It to the Man

Stickers are both the means and the end in the Nintendo 3DS handheld's Paper Mario: Sticker Star.

THE GAME LONG known as Paper Mario emerged at E3 with the new title of Paper Mario: Sticker Star and a serious focus on stickers. In the game, Mario can peel digital stickers off of game environments, win them from foes, and earn them in quests. In combat, players can use their collected stickers to trigger special attacks, while in field areas they can be used to change the in-game environment, giving Mario new ways to complete quests and make paths to proceed. Paper Mario: Sticker Star will be available this holiday season, both as a traditional Game Card release and as a download from the Nintendo eShop. —**CASEY L.**

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POWER QUIZ

EASY

What two weapons does Bowser use to attack in the original Super Mario Bros.?

AVERAGE

What was the first game in which Bowser teamed up with Mario?

HARDCORE

When Shigeru Miyamoto originally designed Bowser, what animal inspired the character's look?

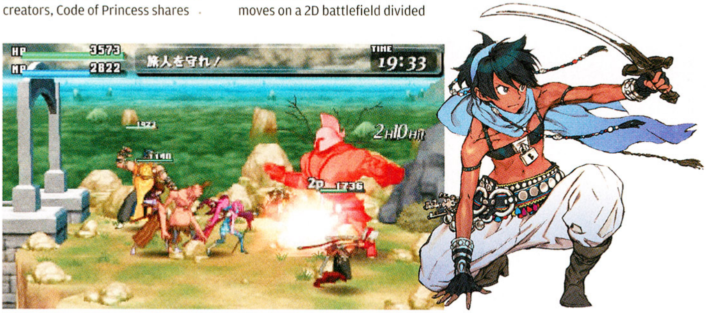
ANSWERS

EASY: Fireballs and hammers; AVERAGE: Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars; HARDCORE: An ox

Deciphering the Code

Atlus is localizing quirky beat-'em-up Code of Princess for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

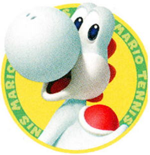
CODE OF PRINCESS, a spiritual follow-up to the classic Sega Saturn action game Guardian Heroes, is headed to North American N3DS systems this fall courtesy of Atlus. Developed by key Guardian Heroes creators, Code of Princess shares a great deal with its predecessor, including a similar distinctive art style, an experience-point-based character-upgrade system, and a combat engine that has players unleashing fighting-game-style moves on a 2D battlefield divided into three parallel layers. The cast and world of Code of Princess are based on a series of figures and illustrations created by Kinu Nishimura, the former Capcom artist who more recently designed the cast of Aksys's Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors. Her original vision for Code of Princess was for a sexy, girl-filled RPG, so expect to see plenty of ladies in the game's cast, and plenty of skin on the game's cover art. **—CASEY L.**

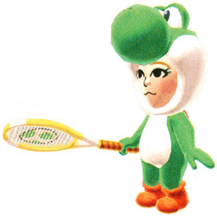


Hidden Pros

Expand your Mario Tennis Open roster with these QR codes.

DO YOU ENJOY Mario Tennis Open, but feel as though there aren't enough adorable creatures for you to play as? Well, buddy, you came to the right place. Scan these QR codes into your copy of the game (go to MarioTennisOpen.nintendo.com for step-by-step instruction), and your matches will instantly become more Yoshi-riffic. Not only will you unlock a green Yoshi outfit for your Mii character, but there's also a Nintendo Power-exclusive White Yoshi to control. **—PHIL T.**

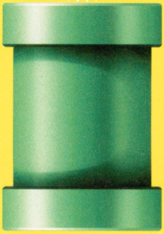




WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

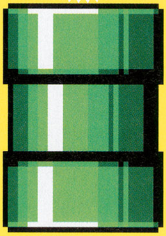
5 YEARS AGO



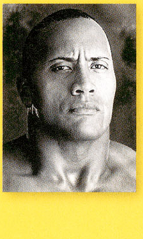
Wii 12-PAGE SPORTS SPECTACULAR!
NINTENDO POWER
RESIDENT EVILS

The suave yet terrifying Albert Wesker was the cover model for Nintendo Power Vol. 217, which celebrated the arrival of Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles and Resident Evil 4 on the Wii console. The issue contained loads of other Wii coverage, too, including looks at Mario Party 8, Pokémon Battle Revolution, and Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure (back when it was known as Project Treasure Island Z). Space Station Tycoon was featured, as well, but Namco Bandai later canceled the game.

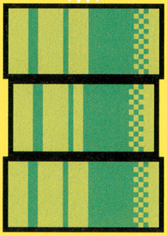
10 YEARS AGO

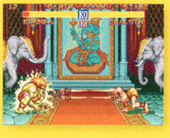


With coverage of the 2002 E3 show comprising a big part of the issue, the July 2002 Nintendo Power was practically bursting at the seams with exciting gaming news. Super Mario Sunshine, The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Metroid Prime, Wario World, Animal Crossing, Star Fox Adventures, and Mario Party 4 were just a few of the enticing titles on display. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson was also featured prominently, as he appeared in not one but two GameCube games: WWE WrestleMania X8 and The Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian.



20 YEARS AGO





July 1992 marked one of the most glorious events in the history of gaming: the Super NES release of Street Fighter II: The World Warrior. Like its coin-op counterpart, this Super NES fighting game pretty much had it all, from precise controls to diverse characters to an amazing soundtrack. It's hard to explain what a momentous occasion this was back in the day, or how astounding it was to play such an impressive port of such a popular arcade game from the comfort of your own home. It eventually sold more than 6 million units.

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
11 Classic Games Hearts • Spades Euchre • Canasta Bridge • more
20 Solitaire Games FreeCell • Klondike Golf • Yukon • Spider Pyramid • many more
13 Casino Games Texas Hold'em • Double Flop Hold'em 5-Card Draw • 7-Card Stud • BlackJack Crazy Pineapple • 5 Video Poker • more
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SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD PLUS
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COLLECTOR'S CORNER

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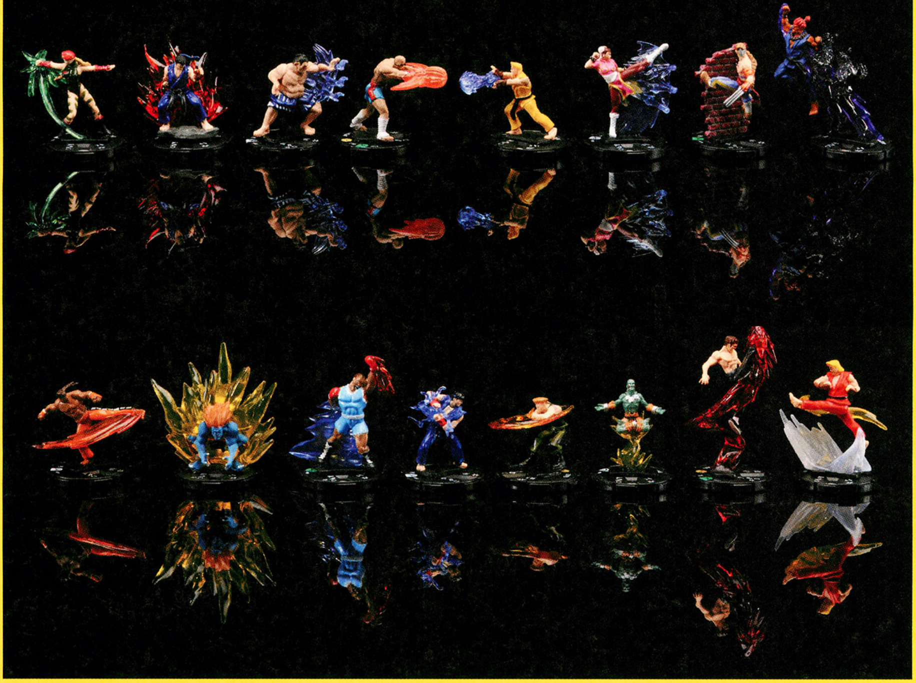
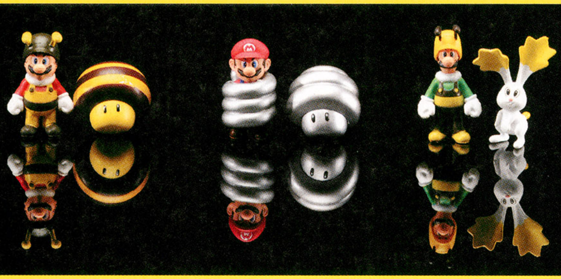
Clix with Kicks

The HeroClix collectible-figurine game recently branched out into the world of Capcom's Street Fighter! All of your favorite World Warriors are represented, from Ryu, Guile, Chun-Li, and Cammy to Balrog, Sagat, Vega, and Akuma. They're available in sets and single-figure booster packs.





Galactic Duos

Relive Mario's interstellar adventures with these Super Mario Galaxy 2 mini-figurine two-packs from Banpresto. Three sets are available: Bee Mario with Bee Mushroom, Spring Mario with Spring Mushroom, and Bee Luigi with Star Bunny.

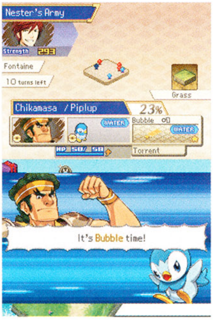
Conquering Hero

Producer Hisashi Koinuma reveals the secrets behind Pokémon Conquest.

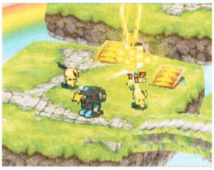
Mixing the lighthearted world of Pokémon with the history-laden world of Nobunaga's Ambition seemed like the oddest combination since pretzels and peanut butter, but sure enough, the two game concepts taste great together. We wanted to find out more about the creation of this unique strategy title, so we went right to the source—producer Hisashi Koinuma of Tecmo Koei.

NINTENDO POWER What about Pokémon and Nobunaga's Ambition make them a good fit for each other?
HISASHI KOINUMA It was actually [a decision made] between The Pokémon Company's president, Mr. [Tsunekaz] Ishihara—basically the founder of the Pokémon series—and Tecmo Koei's president, Mr. [Yoichi] Erikawa, who is the founder of the Nobunaga series. There was a lot of discussion between the two of them to get the two series together. There are similarities in that there are 17 different types of Pokémon, and also 17 different regions to take over in the original Nobunaga's Ambition simulation series. So there are a few common elements in those areas.

Why is Eevee the Pokémon that you start with?
In Pokémon Conquest the Trainer, or in this case Warlord, chooses a partner, and with Eevee—because Eevee can evolve into many different types—the Pokémon is a bit of an extension of the player. We saw it as an excellent fit for the series.



It's Bubble time!

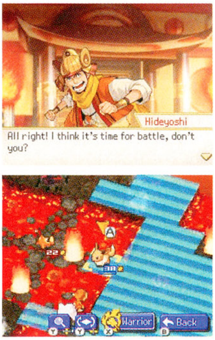


In general, how did you determine which Pokémon would be included in the game?
In terms of the characters that are in Pokémon Conquest, the visual styles of the characters are from the Tecmo Koei series Samurai Warriors. Based on the fact that these characters will have a link with certain Pokémon, we took a look at what kind of Pokémon would be a good fit for them from a visual standpoint—especially since one of the key themes of the game is the link between the characters and their Pokémon. That bond between the two is very important, so we used that as a basis to decide which Pokémon would be in the game.

Do you have a favorite Warlord/Pokémon pairing?
From a visual standpoint, I like the combination of Gracia and Munna. But I also like the combination of Yukimura and Tepig, since Yukimura's armor is red and it gives the image of fire.

What challenges did you face combining the fairly realistic world of Nobunaga's Ambition and the mostly fantasy world of Pokémon?
Specifically because the samurai period is a lot more realistic, we decided to set the game in a fantasy world, so it's a little bit more fitting for the two. Once we established the world, we added elements from the Nobunaga side as well as the Pokémon side. But it was also a key point to keep a type of Pokémon strategy in mind to be successful in creating this game. We were able to find ways to combine the two.

The player has never been able to evolve in previous Pokémon games, so what was the inspiration for including Warlord evolution in this game?
Usually in the Pokémon games it's the Pokémon that are the main characters and not so much the Trainer—it's about the Pokémon getting stronger and evolving throughout the game. But in this game, it seemed like a bit of an odd balance if only the Pokémon evolve and nothing happens with the Warlords, so we thought that maybe we should get them to evolve as well since they're working together. We actually discussed this with The Pokémon Company, and they said that they would definitely be interested in having both Pokémon and the Warlords evolve. It's not just about the strength of the Pokémon evolving and getting stronger until the story finishes. It's really about both the Pokémon and the Warriors; it's a combination. The story is made of both, so we wanted to make sure that these elements were in both characters.



All right! I think it's time for battle, don't you?

What was the collaborative process like between Tecmo Koei, The Pokémon Company, and Nintendo?
In terms of planning the artwork and design, it was largely done by Tecmo Koei. But in terms of the actual design document, that was where The Pokémon Company strongly cooperated. When it came to testing and balancing, [Nintendo's] Mario Club was also included, and all three companies ended up being involved in that process as well.

Were you planning on releasing Pokémon Conquest in North America from the beginning?
When we were first developing we felt that it would be nice if it could be released in North America, so on purpose we made sure that the worlds were fantasy worlds and not actual Japanese places. And then we were approached to release it in North America, which we were very happy about.

Are there any interesting stories you can tell about things that happened during the development process that no one really knows about yet?
The game did come out on DS, so of course we were considering the DS as a platform. But with Tecmo Koei we do make a lot of PC games as well, so for the first couple of months, we [Tecmo Koei] were actually considering developing it as a PC game. But before we even were trying to implement it on PCs, we cut out a bunch of paper and tried to develop the game as a board game. [Laughs]

GAME FORECAST

READERS' MOST WANTED

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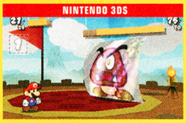
NINTENDO 3DS



1. Paper Mario: Sticker Star
2. Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon
3. New Super Mario Bros. 2
4. Animal Crossing*
5. Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance

Wii

1. Kirby's Dream Collection Special Edition
2. The Last Story
3. Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
4. Skylanders Giants
5. Young Justice: Legacy

Wii U

1. Rayman Legends
2. Batman: Arkham City—Armored Edition
3. Assassin's Creed III
4. LEGO City: Undercover
5. Darksiders II

NINTENDO 3DS

50 Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	FALL 12
Angler's Club: Ultimate Bass Fishing 3D	D3	2012
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	FALL 12
Boulder Dash-XL 3D	Giant	TBA
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate	Konami	FALL 12
Chevrolet Camaro Wild Ride	Storm City	8/12
Classic Games Overload: Card and Puzzle Edition	Telegames	11/12
Code of Princess	Atlus	FALL 12
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion	Disney	FALL 12
Disney Pixar Finding Nemo	Disney	9/12
Disney Princess: My Fairytale Adventure	Disney	9/12
Etrian Odyssey IV	Atlus	TBA
Fire Emblem: Awakening	Nintendo	TBA
Harvest Moon: A New Beginning	Natsume	Q4 2012
Hello Kitty Picnic	Majesco	10/12
Hotel Transylvania	GameMill	9/12
Imagine Babyz	Ubisoft	10/12
Imagine Fashion Life	Ubisoft	10/12
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	11/12
Junior Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance	Square Enix	7/12
LEGO City: Undercover*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon	Nintendo	HOL 12
Mahjong 3D: Warriors of the Emperor	Giant	TBA
Moshi Monsters Moshlings Theme Park	Activision	10/12
NCIS 3D	Ubisoft	9/12
New Super Mario Bros. 2	Nintendo	8/12
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Old Skool Classics	Storm City	9/12
Outdoors Unleashed: Africa 3D	Mastiff	2012
Outdoors Unleashed: Alaska 3D	Mastiff	2012
Paper Mario: Sticker Star	Nintendo	HOL 12
Petz Countryside	Ubisoft	11/12
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Rabbids Rumble	Ubisoft	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	FALL 12
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	HOL 12
Spy Hunter	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Super Black Bass	Rising Star	9/12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Virtue's Last Reward	Aksys	FALL 12
Word Wizard 3D	Storm City	9/12

Wii

Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	FALL 12
Big Time Rush	GameMill	11/12
Deer Drive Legends	Maximum	9/12
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	11/12
Disney Princess: My Fairytale Adventure	Disney	9/12
Harley Pasternak's Hollywood Workout	Majesco	10/12
I Spy Game Pack	Scholastic	9/12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	10/12
Just Dance: Disney Party	Ubisoft	10/12
Karaoke Joysound	Konami	2012
Kirby's Dream Collection Special Edition	Nintendo	9/12
The Last Story	Xseed	8/12
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Mama's 2-Pack	Majesco	8/12
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	10/12
Nickelodeon Dance 2	2K Play	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	FALL 12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	FALL 12
WWE '13	THQ	10/12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013
Zumba Fitness Core	Majesco	10/12

Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Assassin's Creed III	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Batman: Arkham City—Armored Edition	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	HOL 12
Darksiders II	THQ	HOL 12
Family Party: 30 Great Games*	D3	HOL 12
Game & Wario*	Nintendo	2012
Injustice: Gods Among Us	Warner Bros.	TBA
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	HOL 12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	HOL 12
LEGO City: Undercover	Nintendo	HOL 12
Marvel's Avengers: Battle for Earth	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Mass Effect 3	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	HOL 12
New Super Mario Bros. U	Nintendo	HOL 12
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	Nintendo	HOL 12
Nintendo Land	Nintendo	HOL 12
Pikmin 3	Nintendo	HOL 12
Project P-100*	Nintendo	2012
Rabbids Land	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Rayman Legends	Ubisoft	TBA
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	HOL 12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
SiNG*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	TBA
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	HOL 12
Sports Connection	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tank! Tank! Tank!	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Tekken Tag Tournament 2*	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Online	Ubisoft	TBA
Wii Fit U	Nintendo	2012
Wii U Panorama View*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013	Ubisoft	HOL 12
ZombiU	Ubisoft	HOL 12

NINTENDO DS

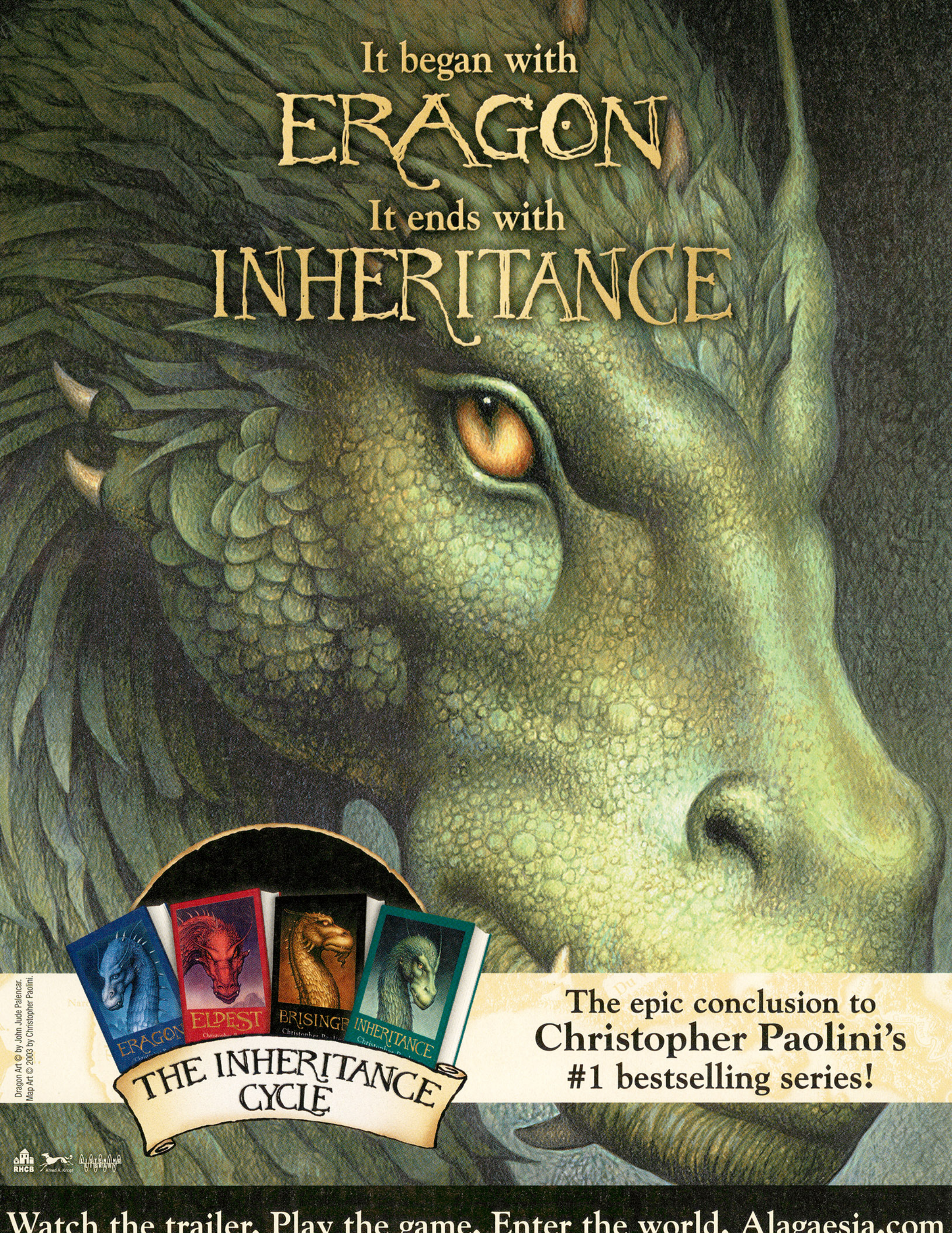
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	FALL 12
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Mama's Combo Pack Vol. 1 & 2	Majesco	8/12
Pokémon Black Version 2	Nintendo	FALL 12
Pokémon White Version 2	Nintendo	FALL 12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	FALL 12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	HOL 12
Winx Club: Magical Fairy Party	D3	HOL 12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH.

* TENTATIVE TITLE

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.


It began with
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It ends with
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ERAGON
ELDEST
BRISINGR
INHERITANCE
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Unchained Blades

VIRTUAL CONSOLE PREVIEW
Shantae

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Pokémon Dream Radar & Pokédex 3D Pro

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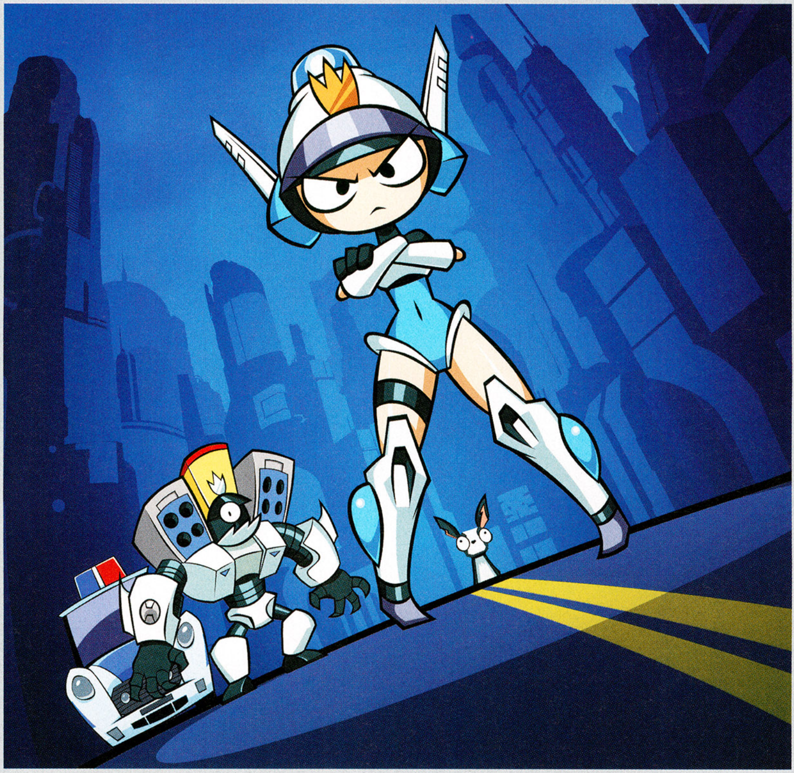
SNAKENOID DELUXE

WiiWARE REVIEWS
FROGGER: HYPER ARCADE EDITION

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
METAL SLUG 3
MONSTER WORLD IV
SUPER HANG-ON
WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND



A New Definition of Force

WayForward's Mighty Switch Force! is reborn in high definition on Wii U.

BOASTING SUPERB 2D GRAPHICS, compelling gameplay, and a unique mix of puzzles and action, Mighty Switch Force! is one of the most exciting titles to have hit the Nintendo eShop. But, as it turns out, futuristic police officer Patricia Wagon's mission to bring the Hooligan Sisters to justice has only just begun—the game is being redrawn and rebuilt as one of the first downloadable titles for the Wii U console. While retaining the same stage designs and innovative background-shifting play mechanics of the original version, Mighty Switch Force! HD will look better than ever thanks to extraordinarily detailed hand-crafted visuals. (And if you don't believe it, just take a look at the character-art comparisons shown on the next page.) Here to provide further details on Mighty Switch Force! HD is WayForward creative director Matt Bozon. —**CHRIS H.**

NINTENDO POWER First, the obvious question—why bring Mighty Switch Force! to Wii U?

MATT BOZON We've really enjoyed developing for Nintendo's download services and really want to be there for the Wii U launch. While we do have some brand-new games in the planning phase, remaking Mighty Switch Force! in HD lets us experiment on the new hardware. To transform our beloved pixels into traditional character animation—similar to our A Boy and His Blob remake—we've gone back to the original artists to create new, more-illustrative versions of Patricia Wagon and company. The results look more like the promotional artwork, which is a very cool alternative to pixel art. But pixel lovers don't need to fret. WayForward has plenty more pixel-based games on the way too!

Will this be the updated version with the new levels and the quick retry? Will there be any other new features added?

Yes, the recently released "Bonus Incidents" and retry option from the N3DS version will be included in the Wii U version. We're having a tough time putting our pencils down, so we may end up adding even more features before we're done. I guess we'll have to wait and see what's possible before launch!

A big part of the appeal was the 3D background/foreground effects; what are your thoughts on those not being present in the HD version?

I'm a nut for stereoscopic 3D, so I do miss it a bit. But the new animation and visuals add so much to the game that it's hard to imagine Switch Force without them.

How will the unique functions of the controller be used?

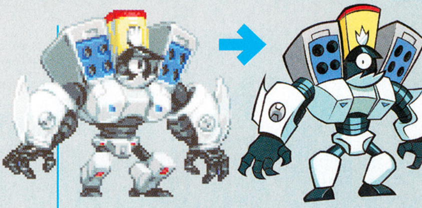
The controller's touch screen displays your Hooligan Tracker just like on the N3DS. When roaming without a TV, a smaller onscreen compass points the way. While this is admittedly not a groundbreaking use of the second screen, it does give the player a few very handy options.

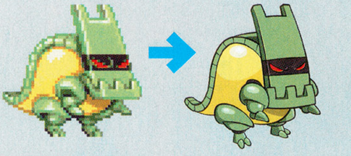
Can you explain what the process was like bringing the game from the Nintendo 3DS handheld to Wii U?

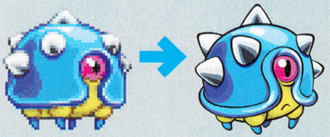
The game engine is very portable and the Wii U hardware is more than capable of running a 2D action puzzler at blazing speeds. So, most of the challenges have been about presentation. Some puzzles had to be rethought in order to match the wider screen dimensions. We're also working extra hard to keep the game's visual integrity intact while switching pixel art for traditional cel animation. With many pixel games going HD lately, we've seen our share of lifeless trace-overs. We don't want the game to feel like a port. It's the same game but a new experience.

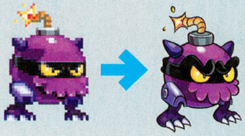
What are your thoughts on future Wii U downloadable releases from WayForward?

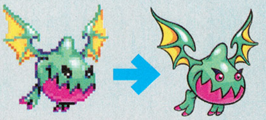
Mighty Switch Force! HD is something of a warmup to help find our groove. In the meantime we've been cooking up even more downloadable surprises for both Wii U and N3DS. We'll definitely have more news down the line!

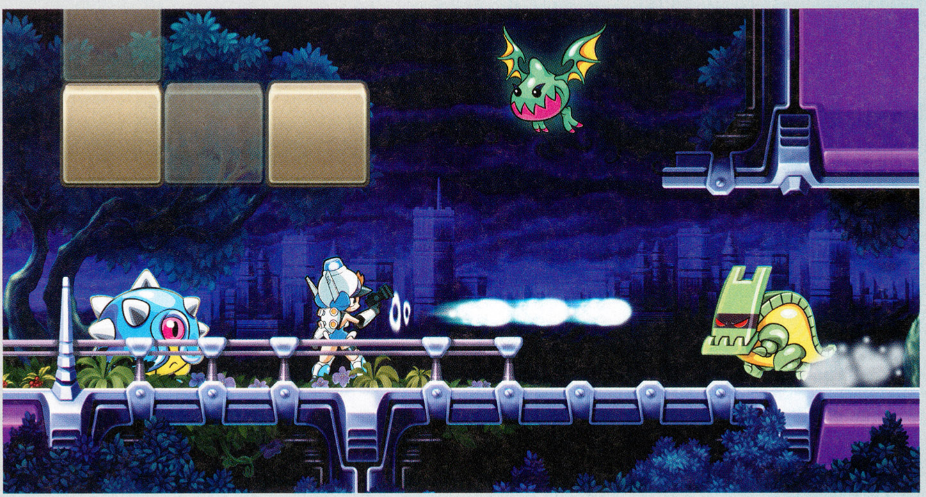


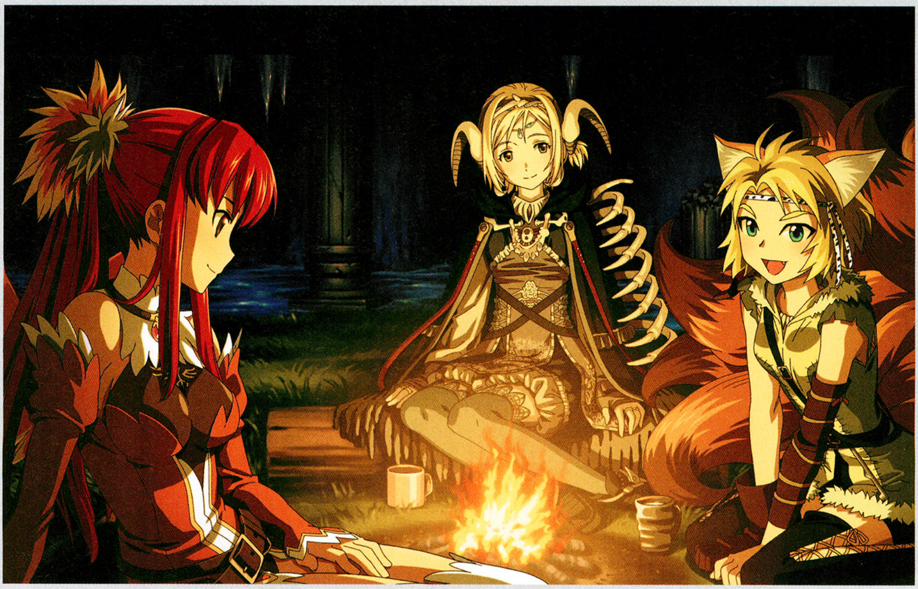












Girls' Night Out

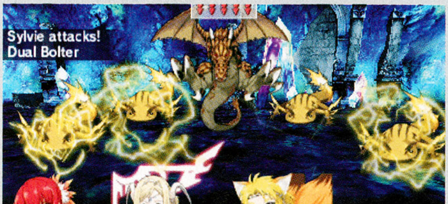
Three heroines band together in Nintendo eShop RPG Unchained Blades.

IN VOL. 277 we gave you a comprehensive overview of Xseed's upcoming dungeon-crawling RPG, Unchained Blades. Since then we've delved deeper into its fantasy world of magic and monster-people, and the further we explore this anime-inspired title for the Nintendo 3DS handheld, the more excited we become.

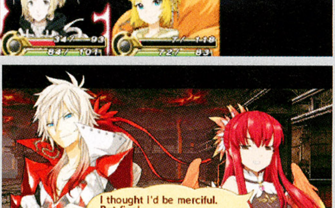
After playing Chapter 1 as the once-powerful dragon-born Fang, you move on to a chapter focused on the young lass Tiana. A fire-wielding melee type, Tiana is a princess of the warring Phoenix Clan. To convince her father to let her leave home, she dupes him into thinking that she's headed to Goddess Clunea to wish for peace for her kingdom. (The goddess will grant anyone a single wish, but only if they pass a Holy Ordeal, which means surviving one of the four towering labyrinths known as Titans.) In reality, however, Tiana's biggest desire is to become a dragon, which she reiterates during an animated cut-scene at the beginning of this chapter.

Tiana's quest begins after her completion of the Temple of Trials, which is a short test that all seekers of Goddess Clunea must endure before embarking on their journey. Tiana quickly encounters two other wish-pilgrims—Sylvie, a demonically dressed magic user of the Reaper Clan, and Niko, a nine-tailed ranger from the Spirit Fox Clan. Since the three ladies finish the Temple of Trials simultaneously, they agree that there was a reason they met, and that it would be much more fun to travel together.

We first see Sylvie before the trio joins forces; in the prologue she's shown tending to her ill brother. Fittingly, she serves as



Sylvie attacks!
Dual Bolter



I thought I'd be merciful.
But fine!

[Right] Fang and Tiana are the stars of Unchained Blades, but when they first meet they hardly see eye to eye.

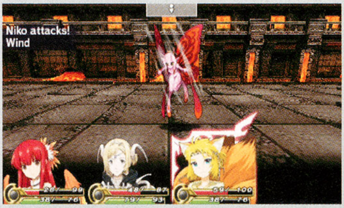
the mother figure of the group, constantly reminding the other girls to behave in a ladylike manner. But despite Sylvie's nurturing nature, her magic skills are a force to be reckoned with. Although all three maidens are casters, Sylvie can use lightning-, fire-, frost, and wind-element attacks, as well as dark magic that will haunt enemies even after she's fallen in battle. Niko also packs a punch; her wind magic and archery skills prove useful in a pinch. Her tomboyish personality is nothing like Sylvie's, however, which leads to some humorous exchanges between the two. Niko's wish is to be smart, and perhaps rightfully so—you'll see her doing things like "marking her territory," activating obvious traps, and generally being downright ditzy.

During the girls' stay at the town's inn, Tiana overhears Huadli, a member of the Dryad Clan, talking with his son Ilio about getting their wish granted. Unsure of where to find a Titan, Tiana convinces the group to follow the father and son, and they soon arrive at Titan Tortuga—a massive labyrinth set on a peninsula. Huadli and Ilio bump into the trio throughout the dungeon, where the polite Huadli reveals his wish to save his village. But since only one wish may be granted per Titan, Tiana is hearing none of it, instead vowing to beat the father and son to the top of the tower.

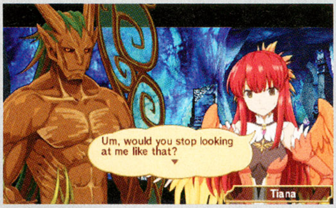
Instead of walls covered in lava like they were in Darius, the Titan from Chapter 1, Tortuga's walls are lined with ice crystals. The Titan's frozen confines are littered with water- and frost-type enemies, so Sylvie's lightning magic really comes in handy here. Additionally, Tortuga introduces a new dungeon mechanic: flooded floors. In some areas, each step causes the water level to rise, and after 40 paces, the party drowns. Leaving the area resets the step counter, but the flooding adds an interesting degree of strategy and suspense to reaching the next floor.

Of course, we're just skimming the surface here. The game has a ton of content, including epic turn-based battles, baffling amounts of exploration, deep character development, a slew of side quests, and even some inebriated shenanigans. With more than seven chapters promising at least 80 hours of immersive gameplay, we're certain Unchained Blades will keep you (ahem!) chained up for quite a while once it hits the Nintendo eShop.

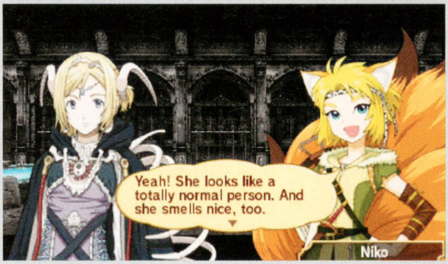
—CODY M.



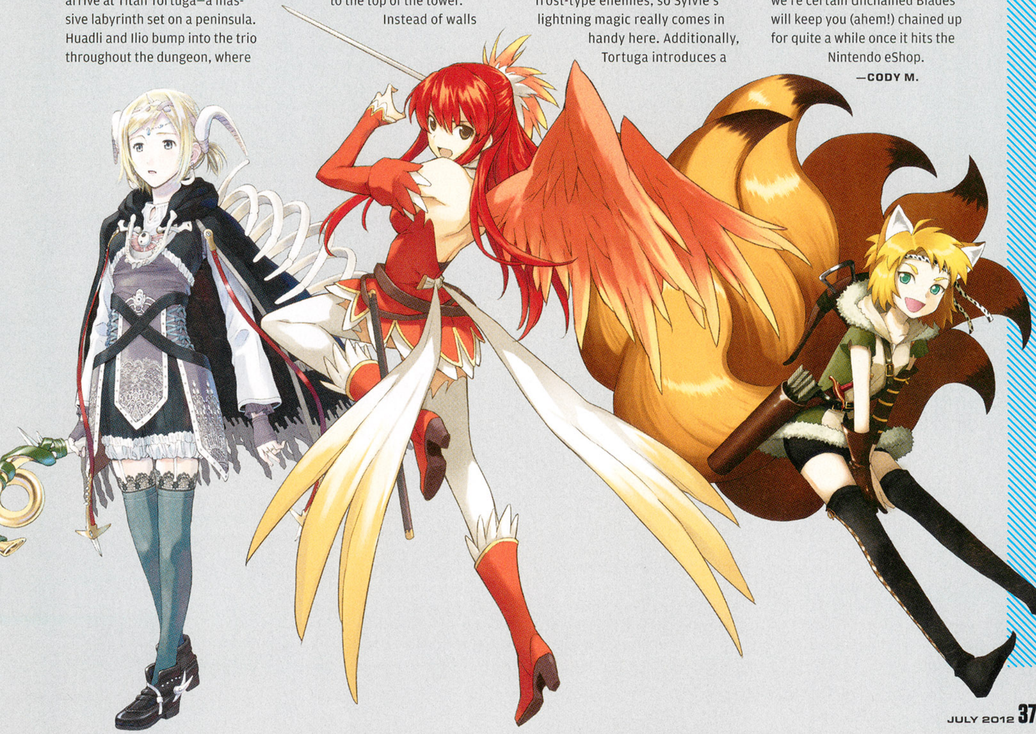
Niko attacks!
Wind

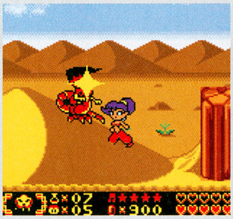


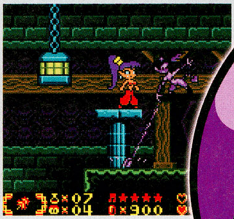
Um, would you stop looking at me like that?



Yeah! She looks like a totally normal person. And she smells nice, too.







Released from the Bottle

WayForward's classic Game Boy Color title Shantae is (finally) coming to the Nintendo 3DS Virtual Console.

SHANTAE WAS A victim of bad timing. When Capcom released the WayForward-developed platformer for the Game Boy Color in 2002, the Game Boy Advance had already been on store shelves for a year. Perhaps in recognition of this, not many copies were manufactured (rumors suggest about 20,000 exist), and despite positive reviews by both fans and critics, Shantae simply never reached a wide audience.

It wasn't until eight years later that WayForward was able to publish a sequel—Shantae: Risky's Revenge—as DSiWare. This game once against thrust Shantae into the limelight, much to the pleasure of her legion of devotees. Despite that title's success, there was still a large demand for a rerelease of the original Shantae. After all, with so few copies out there (and selling for well over $100 on online auction sites), many people haven't had an opportunity to play it. Fortunately, gamers will finally get their chance now that the game is headed to Virtual Console through the Nintendo eShop.

For those late to the party, here's the story: Shantae, the titular half-genie, is designated as the guardian of Scuttle Town, which has come under attack by the female pirate Risky Boots. Risky has stolen an experimental steam engine, and Shantae must stop her before she uses the device for evil. Shantae takes on Risky's minions by attacking with her ponytail. As the game progresses, she is able to transform into various animals by dancing. These forms, such as a wall-climbing monkey and a rock-busting elephant, allow her to perform additional techniques and reach new areas.

Occasionally you'll come across a town to explore, and the view changes from standard side-scrolling to over Shantae's shoulder. In these towns you can talk to passersby for clues and visit shops to buy items, restore your health, play minigames, and more.

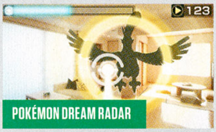
Along the way, Shantae encounters friends like the not-terribly-smart Bolo and the surprisingly adorable zombie Rottytops. There is a great sense of fun throughout the game, and the characters' humorous dialogue reinforces that. Comedy aside, the game is notable for its expertly drawn character sprites and their fantastic animation. It's easily one of the best-looking Game Boy Color titles out there, so it's good news that more people will finally get to see it in action. Shantae is scheduled to arrive on N3DS Virtual Console later this year. **—PHIL T.**

Catch of the Day

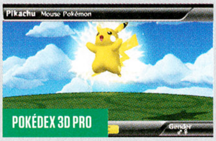
Catch and study the denizens of Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 with a pair of new Nintendo eShop releases.

PLANNING TO PLAY the Pokémon Black Version 2 or White Version 2 games on a Nintendo 3DS? If so, you can get some special support from the Pokémon Dream Radar game and the Pokédex 3D Pro application, a pair of N3DS-exclusive downloads that will be available for purchase this fall.

Pokémon Dream Radar is an augmented-reality game that allows players to find Pokémon hiding in real-world environments, catch them, and transfer them into the saved files of their Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 games. Pokédex 3D Pro is an upgraded and updated version of the existing Pokédex 3D title, featuring detailed information on the 640-plus Pokémon in the series. It too offers augmented-reality features, such as the ability for users to take photos of themselves with Pokémon. **—CASEY L.**



POKÉMON DREAM RADAR



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EVALUATION STATION

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NINTENDO DSi DOWNLOAD
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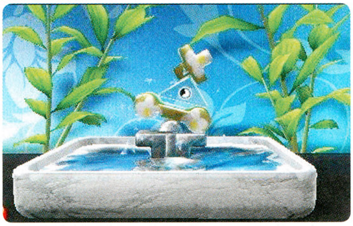


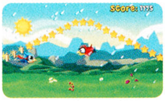
ART OF BALANCE TOUCH!

PUBLISHER: SHIN'EN MULTIMEDIA **GENRE:** PUZZLE **PRICE:** $6.99

Well-appreciated WiiWare title Art of Balance makes its way to N3DS—with additional content and improved stylus control. (The 3D effect isn't shabby here, either.) The game presents players with a series of shapes that must be stacked with sufficient stability to endure a three-second count. The beauty of this physics-based challenge lies principally in its open-ended nature; each level can be solved via countless configurations (it's even possible to win with a crumbling stack, provided no piece completes its descent during the count). Spectacular production values, plenty of content, and a deep respect for what makes puzzle games work (i.e., evolving challenges that keep players engaged) cumulate to make this one of the best puzzlers available. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD



BIRD MANIA 3D

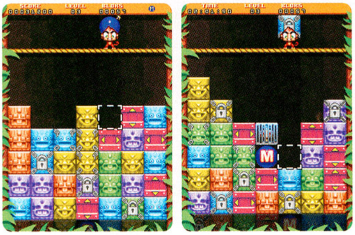
PUBLISHER: TEYON
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $1.99

Bird Mania 3D is fairly straightforward—it's an autoscrolling title in which you direct your feathered friend to collect stars, dash through enemies, and avoid obstacles. The entire game consists of a single endless level that speeds up the farther you fly, and your goal is to accumulate as many points as possible before crash-landing. It's fun in short spurts, the aesthetics are pleasing, and the music is decent, but the game is just too barebones and repetitive to recommend.

—CODY M.

Hmmm...

N3DS DOWNLOAD



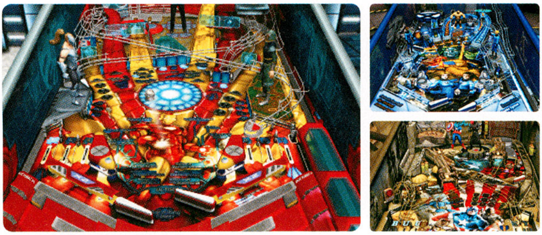
BOMB MONKEY

PUBLISHER: RENEGADE KID **GENRE:** PUZZLE **PRICE:** TBD

As puzzle games go, Bomb Monkey is fairly basic. You toss colored blocks into a pit to form like-colored groups, then use bombs to wipe out those groups. Plan accordingly, and you can form chains that will clear dozens of blocks with one bomb. On its own the gameplay is competent, if not terribly exciting (although it's more fun when played against a friend). However, the simple premise is given a bit of variety thanks to a few different gameplay modes. The best of them is Rescue, where you're tasked with using multiple bombs to blast open a cage while also using them to clear out the ever-rising blocks. Then there's Numbers, where you must destroy numbered spheres in the proper order while contending with the standard blocks. These modes add a welcome sense of urgency that is mostly missing in the "normal" game. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

N3DS DOWNLOAD



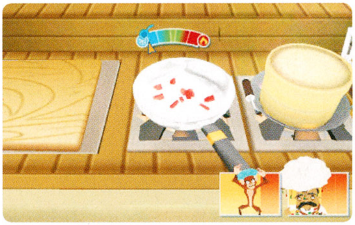
MARVEL PINBALL 3D

PUBLISHER: ZEN STUDIOS **GENRE:** PINBALL **PRICE:** $7.99

Created by the company behind Zen Pinball 3D, Marvel Pinball 3D shares its predecessor's penchant for skewing the realities of pinball. The tables here sport features such as animated characters and special effects that simply wouldn't work on an actual pinball table. The action is also a bit faster-paced than the real deal. That's not to say it doesn't present an authentic game of pinball. On the contrary, the ball physics are outstanding, and the flippers provide a suitable kick. Think of it as a "video game" version of pinball as opposed to a simulation. The four tables included in this collection—each one based on a different Marvel comic (Iron Man, Captain America, the Fantastic Four, and Blade)—are all well designed, and they play quite differently thanks to their varied goals. In fact, each table encourages you to meet these goals with a system that rewards you for accomplishing specific tasks. There is also a well-implemented leaderboard that constantly updates you on others' scores, promoting fierce competition. Some of the voice samples grow repetitive after you've heard them for the 20th time, but you'll probably be too distracted by the impressive 3D effect to notice. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD



ORDER UP!!

PUBLISHER: UTV IGNITION **GENRE:** ALTERNATIVE **PRICE:** $9.99

After we reviewed the retail version of Order Up!! in Nintendo Power Vol. 275, we found out it had been delayed and eventually replaced with this downloadable eShop version. And although I gave the full-priced retail edition a middling score, I feel that the title is well worth checking out in its reasonably priced downloadable form. Nothing has been lost in the transition; it still offers fun cooking-themed minigames and an ever-growing recipe list as you strive to become the greatest chef in town. It also boasts entertaining dialogue and a good sense of progression that similar games lack. An additional restaurant makes this title even more satisfying than its Wii predecessor, and although the gameplay is inherently repetitive, that's hardly a deal-breaker. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

"DO A BARREL ROLL!"
—PEPPY HARE, STAR FOX 64, 1997
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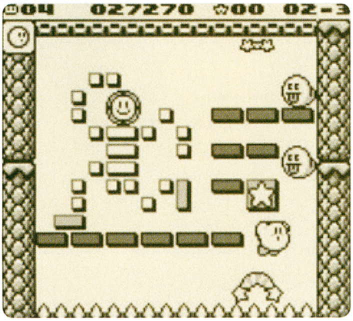
N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



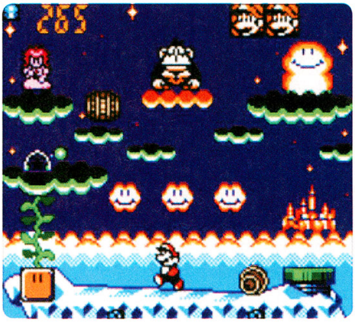
KIRBY'S BLOCK BALL

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1996 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
GENRE: ACTION **PRICE:** $2.99

No stranger to venturing outside platformers, Kirby appears as the ball in this Arkanoid-inspired block-breaking game. The physics aren't the best, so Kirby sometimes doesn't bounce where you'd like him to, but Block Ball is less about realism than about wildly varied stages and Kirby's trademark form-altering power-ups. Stages in which you control paddles along all four walls lead to some enjoyably hectic challenges. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



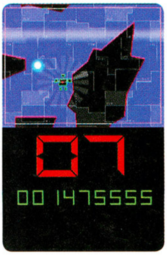
GAME & WATCH GALLERY 2

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1998 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
GENRE: ACTION **PRICE:** $3.99

This collection of Nintendo's classic LCD games ups the ante on its predecessor by including more titles and more unlockable bonuses. The Game & Watch titles are terrific when you want a quick test of your reflexes, and all of the ones included here are pretty darn fun. It is a bit weird seeing the two-screen Donkey Kong G&W game crammed onto one screen on the dual-screened N3DS, but such is the nature of Virtual Console. —PHIL T.

Recommended

DSiWARE



99SECONDS

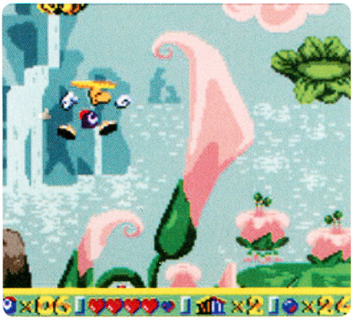
PUBLISHER: ENJOYUP
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

Shifting gears from its predecessor (99Bullets), 99Seconds limits the time in which players survive collisions as they dodge a polygonal maelstrom. The only weapon offered is the ability to slow (or reverse) time. As with the first game, the interesting premise and visuals form a winning combo.

—PATRICK C.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



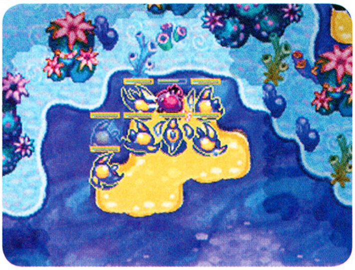
RAYMAN

PLATFORM: GAME BOY COLOR **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 2000
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $4.99

As any fan knows, Rayman offers classic platforming. This port, however, is of dubious value; it's a largely hobbled affair compared to the original. In addition to the expected graphical concessions, parts of the story, several characters, and even large swathes of gameplay are wholly absent! If you're willing to pay a bit more, go for the DSiWare version, which largely remedies these issues. If not, this'll have to do! —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



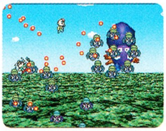
AMOEBATTLE

PUBLISHER: GRAB **GENRE:** STRATEGY **PRICE:** 500 POINTS/$4.99

Amoebattle fits comfortably into the real-time strategy genre, but instead of gathering resources and building a base, you use the stylus to manipulate groups of protozoa, which can mutate, duplicate, and conquer. Micromanaging your prokaryotes can be challenging, as you're sometimes required to split your army or find a food source in addition to executing combat maneuvers. However, the game's adorable amoebas, engaging missions, responsive controls, and well-designed interface keep things interesting and exciting. And with 12 missions at roughly 30 minutes each, there's a lot of content here (although I do wish there were a multiplayer option). The music, unfortunately, sometimes sounds like garbled static. —CODY M.

Recommended

DSiWARE



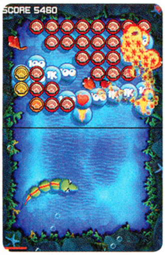
PAUL'S SHOOTING ADVENTURE 2

PUBLISHER: AGETEC
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

While Paul's latest adventure offers a fairly middling and repetitive shooter experience, defeating wave after wave of the Insectian menace is considerably more fun than it should be for one simple reason: weapons. Six projectiles are available, and each can be charged to deliver variations on its base attacks; as a result, choosing the best tool for a given job is strangely strategic. The inclusion of co-op play sweetens the deal further. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



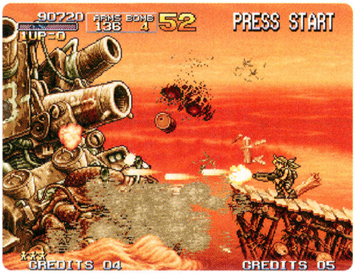
SNAKENOID DELUXE

PUBLISHER: CINEMAX
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Snakenoid Deluxe offers a reptilian take on the classic Breakout/Arkanoid formula. Unfortunately, the game's polish is wholly voided by the foolishness of its premise; by trading the customary paddle for a wiggly, stylus-controlled snake, Cinemax reduces the action to an unplayable mess. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



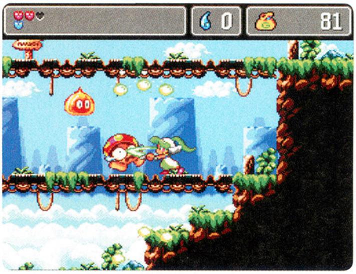
METAL SLUG 3

PLATFORM: NEOGEO **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 2000
PUBLISHER: D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK **GENRE:** SHOOTER **PRICE:** 900 POINTS

Metal Slug 3 has everything that makes the series great: challenging-yet-fun shoot-'em-up gameplay (which is at its best when you're playing with a buddy), impressively rendered sprites, and awesomely over-the-top enemies. This title outshines its predecessors by including even zanier opponents and adding branching paths in the levels. As much as I like Metal Slug 3, though, I would be remiss if I didn't point out two issues I had with the game. First, it seems odd that the human and zombie foes sweat instead of bleed. Second, I encountered some irritating slowdown when the action got too crazy. —JUSTIN C.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



MONSTER WORLD IV

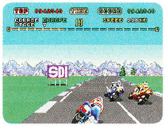
PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1994
PUBLISHER: SEGA **GENRE:** ADVENTURE **PRICE:** 900 POINTS

Phil T.'s Pick

Previously available only in Japan, Monster World IV has finally reached the States, and it's been translated into English, to boot. That alone makes this game a fairly big deal, but it doesn't hurt that it's pretty fantastic. It's fairly linear for an action RPG, but the levels are large and the addition of a cute little sidekick who helps you pull off new moves (including a double jump) adds some technique to the adventure. It's also one of the best-looking and -sounding games for the Genesis. Don't pass this one by. —PHIL T.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



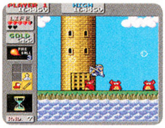
SUPER HANG-ON

PLATFORM: ARCADE
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1987
PUBLISHER: SEGA
GENRE: RACING
PRICE: 900 POINTS

There's a lot to be said about the pure, straightforward, high-speed thrills of a classic arcade racer, but I have to admit that Super Hang-On shows its age. Aside from some cool control options (including a Wii Wheel configuration), there just isn't much here; you get only four tracks and very little in the way of technique. The price is also on the high side; $9 seems pretty steep for a game you used to be able to play for a few quarters. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND

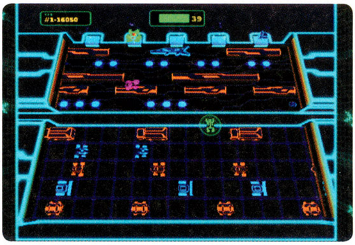
PLATFORM: ARCADE
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1987
PUBLISHER: SEGA
GENRE: ADVENTURE
PRICE: 900 POINTS

Taken on its own, Wonder Boy in Monster Land is an enjoyable and challenging game that suffers from a few noticeable flaws (slippery control, harsh time limits that discourage exploration, dated graphics). It is, however, overshadowed by its similarly themed sequels that are already available on Virtual Console (usually for a lower price). For Wonder Boy junkies only.

—PHIL T.

Hmmm...

WiiWARE



FROGGER: HYPER ARCADE EDITION

PUBLISHER: KONAMI **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** TBD

Konami has been attempting to bring back its classic Frogger for years, with mixed results. This latest update is a Pac-Man Championship Edition-style makeover with slick neon graphics, techno music, and a host of new gameplay modes. These variants put a heavy emphasis on multiplayer action with up to four players (and, of course, you can play against the CPU). Some of the modes are a little too hectic for their own good, but the bulk of them are quite enjoyable. Those looking for a more authentic Frogger experience will enjoy the reskinned versions of the original title (including hilarious Contra and Castlevania themes). —PHIL T.

Recommended

ALSO AVAILABLE

If you're looking for some cerebral eShop challenges, Hamster Corporation has you covered with two new releases: **Sudoku by Nikoli** and **Kakuro by Nikoli** ($4.99 each) will both provide hours upon hours of numeric grid-based puzzles. Just don't expect a lot of frills or options; both titles are pretty minimalistic.... What's hidden in the darkness? Find out in DSiWare game **Chronicles of Vampires: The Awakening** (500 Points/$4.99). Concluding the story that began in Chronicles of Vampires: Origins, the game tasks you with finding more than 200 objects in 20-plus locations.

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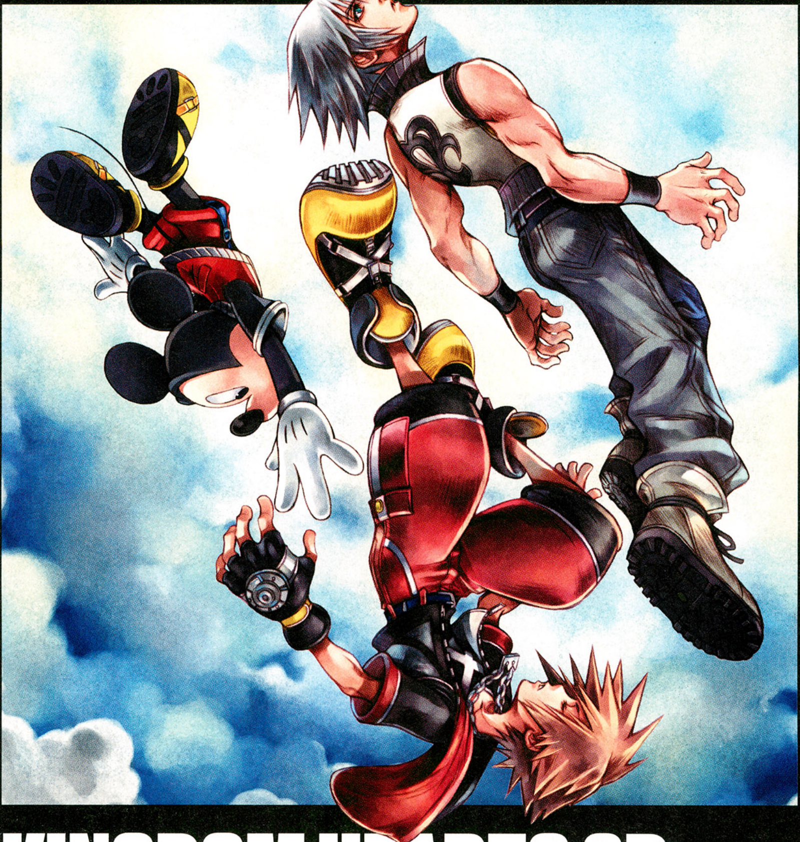
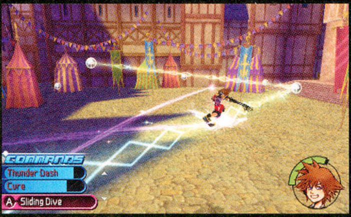
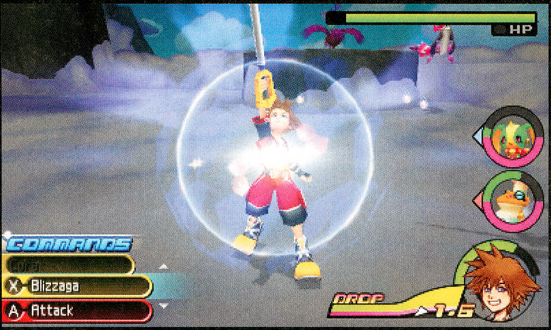
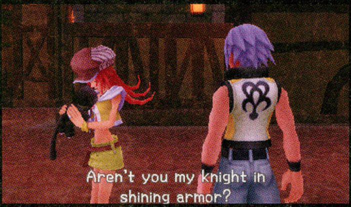


KINGDOM HEARTS 3D: DREAM DROP DISTANCE

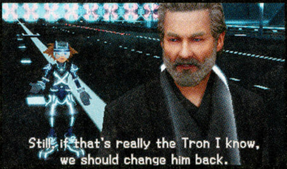
It's the stuff that dreams are made of.







Sora and Riku will join forces with characters from popular franchises such as The World Ends with You [left] and TRON: Legacy [below].


Still, if that's really the Tron I know, we should change him back.

AFTER SAVING MULTIPLE worlds from being swallowed in darkness and stopping the schemes of an assortment of villains, you might think heroic Sora and his best friend Riku would be ready for some rest and relaxation. Fortunately for gamers everywhere, that's not the case. Instead of sitting on their laurels, Sora and Riku, guided by the wizard Yen Sid, are training themselves to become true Keyblade masters by taking the Mark of Mastery exam in Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance. To pass the exam, the duo must travel to seven Sleeping Worlds—places that are trapped in a never-ending slumber and that even the Heartless cannot enter—and revive them by locating and unlocking their keyholes.

As always, that means journeying to a variety of lands teeming with familiar faces from the Disney and Square Enix universes. The game begins on the stormy seas of Destiny Island (the opening stage of the original Kingdom Hearts), where Sora and Riku show their stuff by battling Ursula the Sea Witch from *The Little Mermaid*. From there, the pair travels to another familiar location—Traverse Town—where they team up with Neku, Joshua, Shiki, and other characters from the sleeper DS hit The World Ends with You.

Traverse Town also gives you a great opportunity to practice using Sora and Riku's acrobatic new moves, dubbed FlowMotion. Sure, you can still smash enemies to a pulp using your Keyblade or activate items, spells, and special moves via your Command Deck, but if you want to knock out your foes in the flashiest way possible, FlowMotion is the way to go. If you press the Y Button near an object—a lamp post or wall, for example—you'll interact with the object then launch into an attack, such as rebounding off the wall while twisting like a drill, then somersaulting into a diving smash. (Think of it as aggressive parkour.) You can even use FlowMotion against some enemies—for example, spinning around one foe to smack other enemies in range, then tossing the hapless baddie across the room.

And FlowMotion isn't the only new trick in your arsenal. The Sleeping Worlds are inhabited by colorful creatures called Dream Eaters, and while the evil ones (Nightmares) make up the bulk of the enemies you'll face, the good ones (Spirits) can be recruited as allies. They come in a myriad of shapes and sizes—inspired by dogs, bats, plants, elephants, and more—and each one can lend you a hand in battle with offensive or defensive capabilities. Up to two Spirits can accompany you at any time (after you've created them using combinations of certain items), and filling up a Spirit's Link Gauge allows you to join forces with it for even more powerful attacks.

You'll also gain access to different

Reality Shift abilities throughout the adventure. When you see a pink arrow appear on the Nintendo 3DS system's touch screen, you can either slide across the arrow or press the A and X Buttons to initiate the Reality Shift. In Traverse Town, the maneuver allows you to launch items and enemies as if they were pellets in a slingshot, but in later stages you'll be able to ride around on energy rails, assemble words to create secret codes (each with different effects), encase enemies in bubbles, and more.

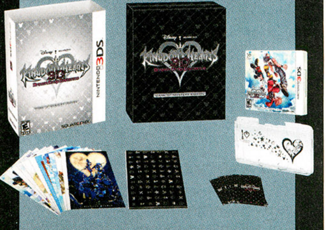
Of course, arguably the best part about Kingdom Hearts is the variety of places to visit and characters to meet, and Dream Drop Distance is no different. After leaving Traverse Town you get to choose from three different realms, including La Cité des Cloches, which is inspired by *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Assisting the hunchback Quasimodo and the gypsy Esmerelda, you'll do battle against the evil forces brought forth by the manipulative and sinister Lord Frollo. Meanwhile, in The Grid, you'll come face-to-face with the characters of *TRON: Legacy*, including photorealistic representations of Kevin Flynn, Sam Flynn, and Quorra, as well as Tron himself. You'll also get to battle foes while driving one of the film's famed light cycles! Prankster's Paradise (based on *Pinocchio*) offers different types of challenges; you'll explore an amusement park and a funhouse as you help Jiminy Cricket try to rescue Pinocchio, and you'll eventually find yourself inside the ginormous whale Monstro, where you'll whack organic switches to turn the environments upside down.

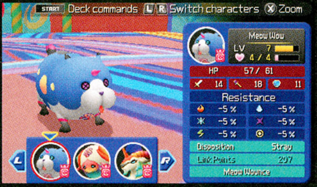
Making things even more interesting is the fact that Sora and Riku each have their own stories to experience. As you play through the game, you'll switch back and forth between characters, sometimes investigating separate events and at other times witnessing the same happenings from different perspectives. But no matter which character you're controlling, you can count on gorgeous visuals, loads of action, tons of charm, crazy plot twists, and that Disney-meets-Square Enix magic that only Kingdom Hearts can provide. —**CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX**
RELEASE: **JULY 2012**

ON YOUR MARK

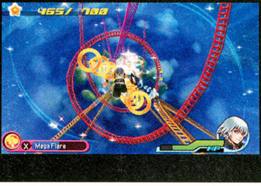
In addition to the regular version of Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance that will be released on July 31, Square Enix is also releasing a special Mark of Mastery Edition of the game. Presented in a collector's case, the package includes the game software, 12 art cards from throughout the series, 5 AR cards that unlock rare Dream Eaters, and a Kingdom Hearts protective case for your system. The Mark of Mastery Edition is priced at $54.99.





Thank goodness. Are you all right?
Riku and I looked for ya everywhere.

[Below] Each level begins with a dynamic 3D descent into the environment.



You might know **Joshua**.
He loves video games, and he owns enough to know they're not all meant for kids. That's why he reminds his friends (at least the ones that have kids) that they all have **big black letters on the box** to help parents find the ones that are best for their families.

You can learn about those ratings at **ESRB.org**

Los Angeles, CA

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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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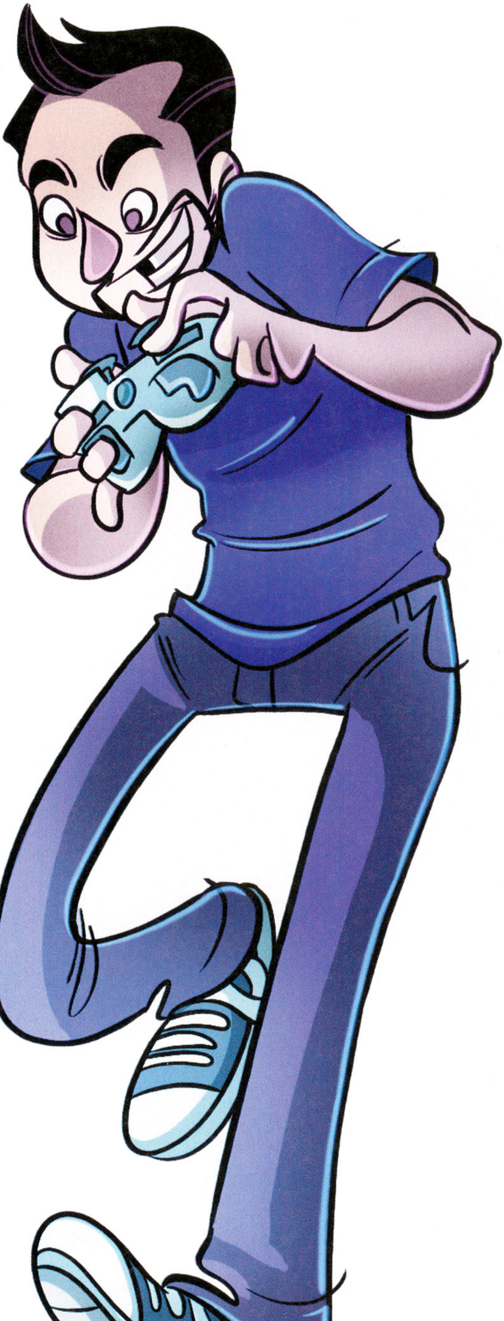
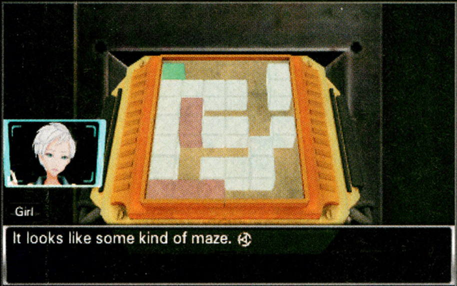
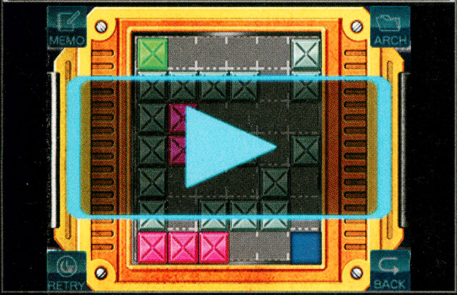
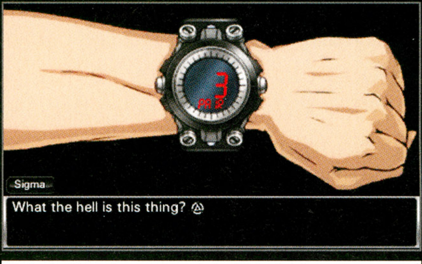
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB




Girl

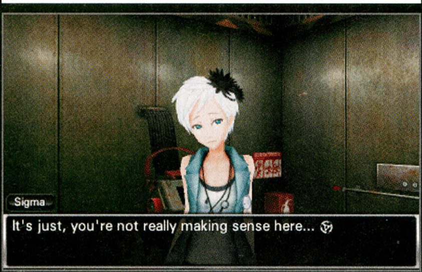
It looks like some kind of maze.




Sigma

What the hell is this thing?

[Below] Phi looks innocent enough, but it's hard to know who to trust when you're playing a game of life, death, and deception.


Sigma

It's just, you're not really making sense here...

VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD

999 problems, but a glitch ain't one.

AFTER A HARD day of grad school, Sigma turned the key in his car's ignition and, suddenly groggy, wondered why his vehicle was filling up with white gas. When he awoke, he was trapped in an elevator with a poison-dispensing watch strapped to his wrist and forced by a psychopathic computer-animated rabbit to play a game of backstabbing and puzzle-solving to win back his freedom. Just a typical day in Aksys's Zero Escape series, where players alternate between solving crafty puzzles and viewing visual-novel segments that are packed with shocking plot twists. If you haven't played the series's first entry—the fantastic (albeit M-rated) Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors for the Nintendo DS—you still have a few months to remedy that mistake before this game debuts. Virtue's Last Reward stands on its own, but it also revisits many of the characters and plotlines from its predecessor.

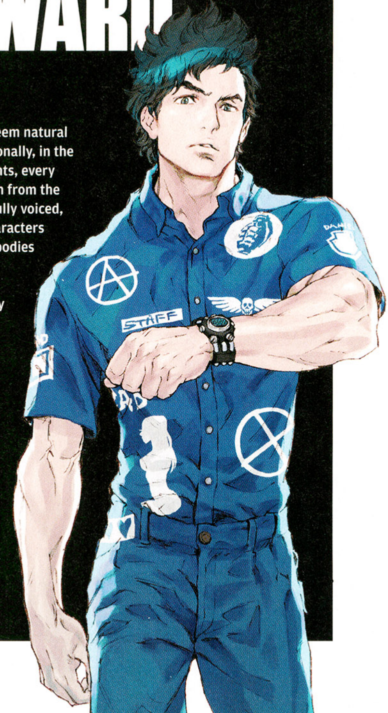
While the game's structure and storytelling style will be instantly familiar to 999 veterans, the jump from Nintendo DS to the Nintendo 3DS handheld has allowed for some significant upgrades in the series's production values. The puzzle rooms are now modeled in real time, allowing players to explore them freely instead of jumping between preset angles. The puzzles include minigames, such as guiding marbles through a maze, that use the N3DS gyro sensor in ways that actually seem natural and intuitive. Additionally, in the game's novel segments, every line of dialogue, even from the supporting cast, is fully voiced, and the modeled characters move their lips and bodies as they talk, adding some charm and energy to the lengthy conversations. And in a game that has you ruthlessly betraying friends to win a contest that can produce but one survivor, a little charm goes an awfully long way.

—CASEY L.

Masked man

I have no idea where I am, who I am, or even what day it is.

N3DS PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **CHUNSOFT**
RELEASE: **FALL 2012**



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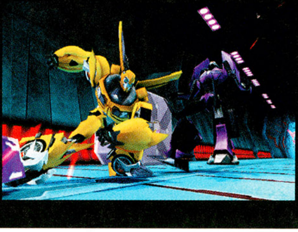
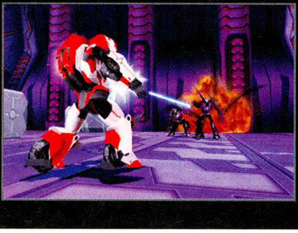
TRANSFORMERS: PRIME—THE GAME

The robots in disguise get primed for action.

MOST PEOPLE RECOGNIZE the Transformers from the Michael Bay-directed movies or from the original '80s cartoon, but there have been numerous iterations of the popular franchise since its inception. The latest is *Transformers: Prime*, a weekly CG-animated TV show—well into its second season at the time of this writing—wherein Optimus Prime and his small band of Autobots (consisting of Arcee, Bulkhead, Bumblebee, and Ratchet) defend Earth from Megatron and his Decepticon forces. It's a basic premise, sure, but the series is chock-full of action and compelling characters—which makes it an ideal subject for a game.

Certainly, being a brawler based upon the show and having the show's voice actors reprise their roles should be enough to pique fans' interests, but Transformers: Prime—The Game goes the extra mile with its story, which is a collaboration between Activision and Hasbro. Shiva Deonarine, an associate producer at Activision, elaborates: "The story for the game is unique, all-new, and runs parallel to the events happening in season two of the TV show. We begin with the Decepticons intercepting a mysterious meteor approaching the earth and the Autobots arriving to try and thwart their plans. Due to a massive eruption of power during a battle on the meteor, the Autobots are separated from each other, plunge to Earth, and lose contact with [their young human allies Jack, Miko, and Raf] who are monitoring them at base. Unknown to the Autobots and the kids,

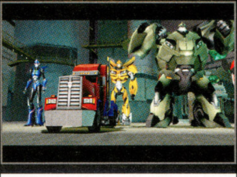


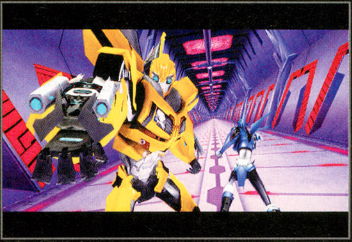


the Decepticons may have uncovered an ancient power that could mean the end of the Autobots and possibly the earth."

The game allows you to play as all five Autobots (the one you control changes depending on the level), each with advantages. For instance, Deonarine tells us, "Arcee is very quick and acrobatic with her attacks while Bulkhead, although a bit slower, hits much harder." Furthermore, "all of the playable characters have power-up abilities. Essentially the player has an upgrade meter, and when it's full they can unleash advanced combos and weapon fire on their enemies. Their entire combat system is upgraded while still maintaining the uniqueness of each character." Of course, playing as giant robots is only half the story; these are Transformers we're talking about, after all. "There is huge emphasis on using both robot and vehicle mode to the player's benefit. The player can change form at will and must use both forms in order to progress. [Different] abilities are available if you are in robot or vehicle mode, and you will need to use both in order to defeat your foes," Deonarine explains.

The primary foes you'll face are the Vehicons, the *Transformers: Prime* equivalent of the battle droids from the *Star Wars* prequels. In the show there are two types of Vehicons—they transform into either a car or a jet—but Activision worked with Hasbro to create three new versions of Vehicons that they plan to reveal sometime closer to the game's release.





There are five playable characters in the story mode, but there are 11 to choose from in the yet-to-be-revealed multiplayer mode.

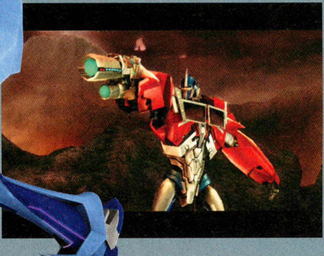
In addition to these fodder enemies, you will encounter bosses. "We have many boss battles and really tried to make them unique and awesome," says Deonarine. "All the Autobots square off against Decepticons. Old rivalries definitely come into play here, and some new ones are forged. For example, we have Airachnid and Arcee battle it out. The fights take place in various locations, so the environments play a role. The player must use the environments to their advantage to defeat their enemies."

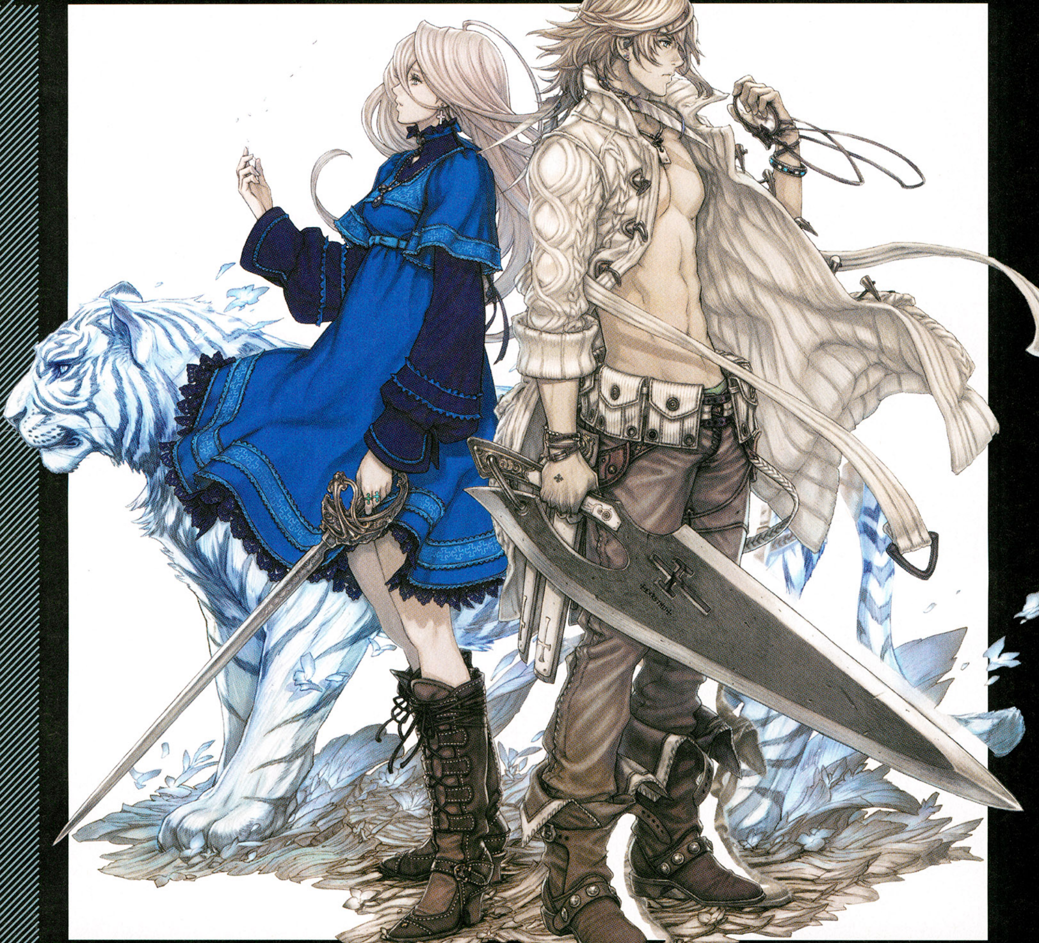
Based on what we've seen so far, Transformers: Prime—The Game seems to be extremely faithful to the source material. As fans of the TV show ourselves, we can't wait to experience the end result. —JUSTIN C.

Wii
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: NOWPRO
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2012

YOU GOT THE TOUCH!

Transformers: Prime—The Game is being released on the Nintendo 3DS and Nintendo DS systems in addition to the Wii console. Associate producer Shiva Deonarine tells us the Nowpro-developed N3DS version "is supporting full 3D gameplay functionality and touch-screen features. We allow the player to use their upgrade system via the touch screen. Level maps are also shown on the touch screen showing off key areas that may interest the player if they wish to explore and find hidden items." Whereas the N3DS game is similar to the Wii title, the DS version is slightly divergent, according to Deonarine: "We had to devise a control scheme unique to the DS, so we brought on the talent of Altron Corporation for this. Not only have we tailored a control scheme for the DS while maintaining the full functionality of Prime, but Altron was also able to design levels exclusively for the DS while still keeping in line with the story for the game."



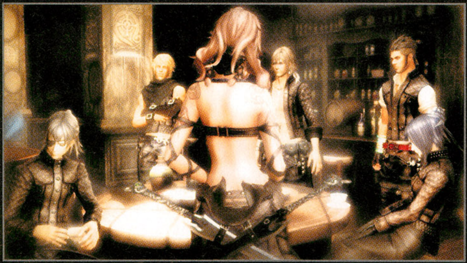


THE LAST STORY

The minds behind Final Fantasy deliver a story of epic proportions.

AS YOU COULD probably tell from our massive amounts of coverage over the past few issues, we're pretty excited about The Last Story. And with good reason: it's a full-blown role-playing game directed by Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi and with music by legendary composer Nobuo Uematsu. But even though this fantasy epic has all the polish and distinctive visual style that you'd expect from a classic Japanese RPG, The Last Story is far from traditional or clichéd.

A unique real-time combat



Zael's mercenary allies are an interesting bunch to say the least.

system allows you to take cover from attacks, power up in circles of magic, and snipe at enemies from afar; you can even target parts of the destructible environments to obliterate your foes. Naturally, you can get up close and personal with sword-based strikes, as well, and a big part of battle strategy involves using protagonist Zael's abilities to draw enemies' attention while your allies do their stuff.

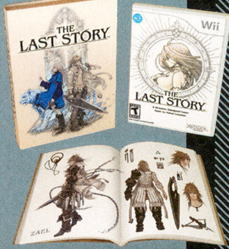
The interaction between Zael and his comrades promises to be one of the highlights of the game; as part of a group of mercenaries, Zael is surrounded by an assortment of colorful characters—such as his longtime friend Dargran, unsociable mage Yurick, and the hard-hitting, hard-partying Syrenne—who seem to have a lot more depth than the usual RPG stereotypes. But it's Zael's relationship with a princess named Calista that could be the game's strongest narrative element; unlike some games in which romances are only hinted at, The Last Story makes Zael and Calista's feelings for each other evident from the start. This isn't necessarily an RPG about grandiose world-altering events—players can expect an adventure on a much more intimate scale.

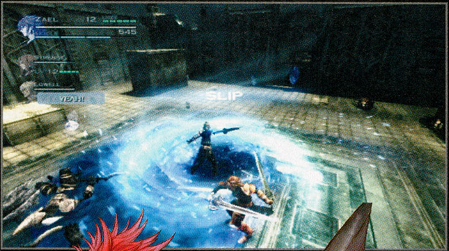
Other highlights include loads of side quests, plentiful outfit-customization options, and online battles (for up to six players) that allow you to earn rare items. The Last Story has all the ingredients to be one of the must-have games of the year. —CHRIS H.

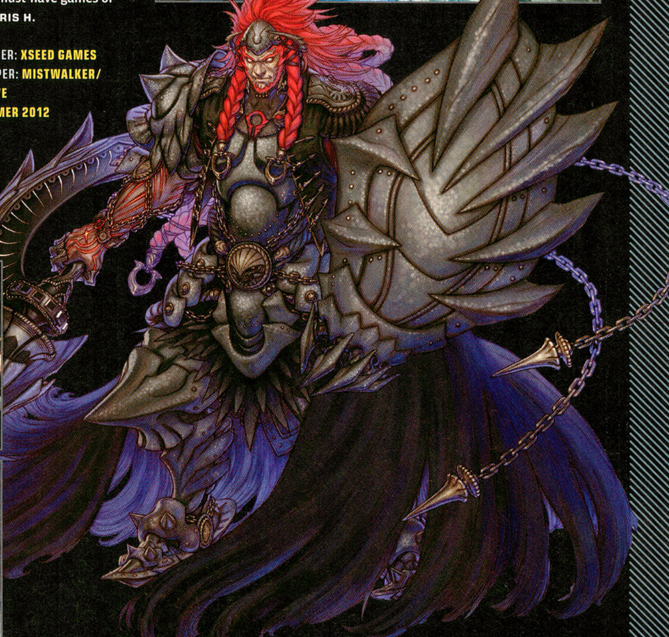
Wii PUBLISHER: **XSEED GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **MISTWALKER/ AQ INTERACTIVE**
RELEASE: **SUMMER 2012**

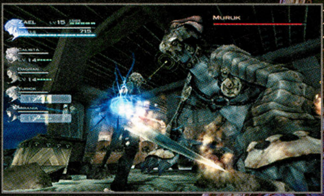
ART APPRECIATION

Still need another reason to pick up The Last Story when it hits this summer? Then how about this: the initial run of the game will feature special collector's-edition packaging and come bundled with an art book that boasts page after page of the game's gorgeous visual designs. It's a treat that RPG fans won't want to miss.





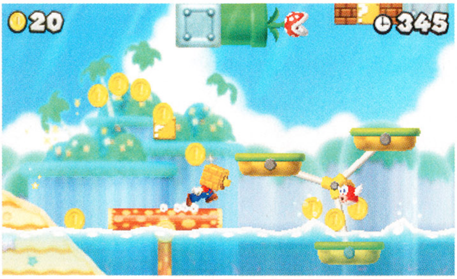


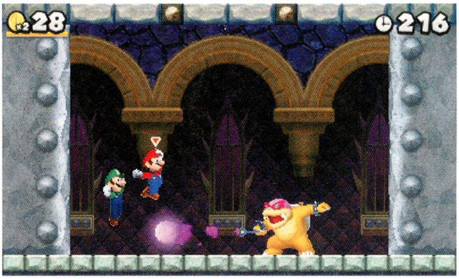


BY **CASEY LOE**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO** RELEASE: **AUGUST 2012**

N3DS





The Gold Standard

Old-school Mario platforming and a newfound lust for loot meet in **New Super Mario Bros. 2** for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

IT'S HARD not to feel sorry for Mario. Every week he's out there busting his butt to rescue Princess Peach while squeaking by on a plumber's salary, yet his brother Luigi buys a single haunted mansion and suddenly has more gold than Fort Knox. After seeing Luigi drive by in his emerald-studded Escalade, who can blame poor Mario for crumpling up Bowser's latest ransom note and declaring, "forget this. It's time to get *paid*!" OK, we don't know if that's the actual story to New Super Mario Bros 2—and it's most likely not. But from what we've seen of the gameplay, it's not a bad guess.

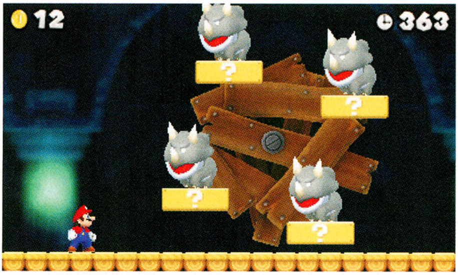
New Super Mario Bros. 2 is all about the coins. You know, those shiny spinning things that—until now—you've mostly just picked up to hear that satisfying *ping* sound. New Super Mario Bros. 2 has so many coins that the traditional counter in each level has been expanded from two digits to four, and even space for 9,999 coins might not be enough. The game also keeps track of every coin you collect over the lifetime of the game, dutifully tallying them on the title screen as Mario amasses a fortune that may one day put even Luigi's to shame. Both of the game's newly revealed power-ups have been designed to generate ludicrous amounts of cash, and under the right circumstances even Mario's foes can be transformed into coin-spewing machines. What can you do with all these coins? We don't yet know the full answer to that, but the game's new Coin Rush mode does a wonderful job of demonstrating how much fun rampant money-grubbing can be.

TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN

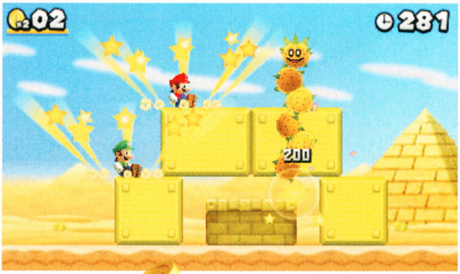
In Coin Rush mode, you play three consecutive levels selected from among the worlds you've visited in the standard single-player mode. You get only a single life, with no way to earn 1-ups, and each level is timed. Your goal is to gather as many coins as possible, and if you successfully complete the sequence of levels, your coin tally will be recorded and shared with everyone you StreetPass. If they want to try to beat your best effort, they can play the same three-level set in their own game and throw their score right back at you when next you pass.

The thing that makes Coin Rush mode so infectious is that there are always more coins to get. Mario can jump through gold rings that,

SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

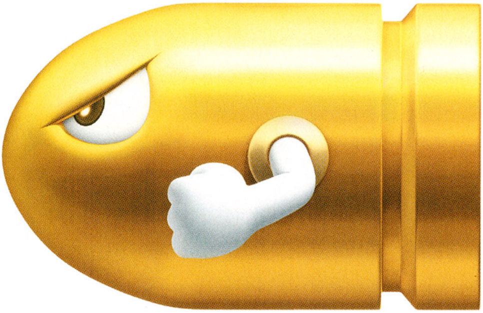


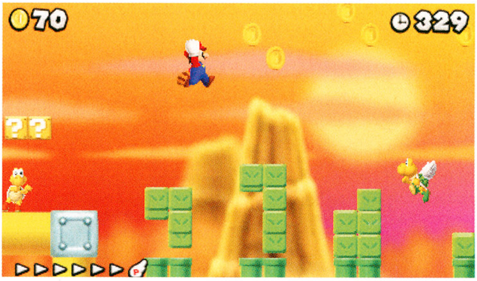
[Above] Reznors made their series debut in Super Mario World, but the phone hasn't rung since. Nice to see them getting some work in NSMB2.

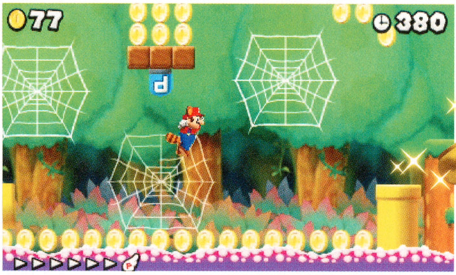


for a limited time, make every enemy into a source of currency: Cheep-Cheeps leap out of the water with a trail of coins behind them, kicked Koopa shells scatter coins along their course, and geysers of coins erupt from the pipes of defeated Piranha Plants. And Mario has two new power-ups that can put hundreds of coins in his pocket. A gold flower will turn our hero into Gold Mario, who has the ability to fire projectiles. It's similar to the classic Fire Mario, but Gold Mario's projectiles turn everything they touch into coins, allowing him to rapidly transform brick walls into piles of cash and dispense with foes in the most lucrative way possible. Another new power-up appears after you extract all the coins from a coin block; the block falls on Mario's head, and for as long as it's there (it lasts for several seconds), Mario will generate a coin with each step he takes. The faster Mario moves, the faster he gains coins, so players with the skill to make a mad dash through the level can generate massive quantities of coins before the block falls off.

But the best source of Coin Rush mode's coins is the flagpole at the end of each level. By executing a perfectly timed jump or using the right power-up to hit the very top of the flagpole, your coin total straight-up doubles. If you're judicious about hunting down each level's hidden coins and skilled at topping the flagpoles, you can easily end a Coin Rush challenge with several thousand coins in your pocket.







THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

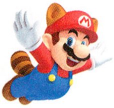
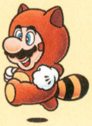
While Coin Rush mode offers a challenging new way to test your skills and compete with friends, the heart of New Super Mario Bros. 2 is, as always, the standard story mode. While we've only been able to see a few levels, it seems to be exactly what one would expect from a modern Mario game: multiple worlds that each have a scrolling overworld map, three hidden Star Coins per level, and the usual assortment of Mario gimmicks and power-ups. The coin theme pops up constantly, adding a new twist to many classic Mario mechanics. Find a hidden switch, and pipes shower you with coins. An all-coin version of the classic rotating power-up boxes can reward you with as many as 50 coins if you hit it at just the right moment. And some of the hidden rooms offer an embarrassment of riches that tops anything seen in previous installments of the series. (And yes, in the story mode you still do get a 1-up for every 100 coins, so you probably won't need to worry about running out of lives.)

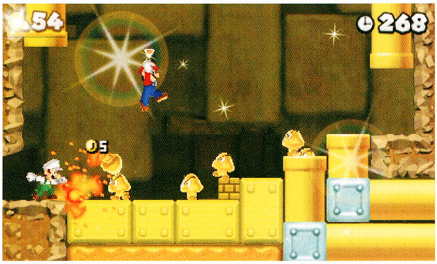
The coolest thing about the story mode is that, as in New Super Mario Bros. Wii, you needn't go it alone. Two-player co-op is available throughout the entire game—not simply on preselected levels, as in the original New Super Mario Bros.

The Taxonomy of Mario Flight

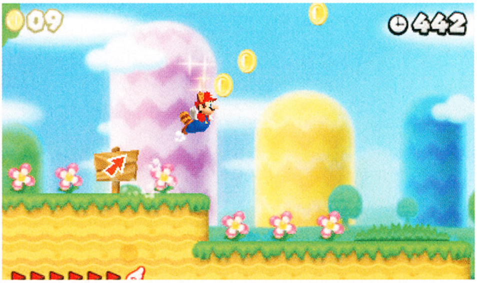
In addition to the two new coin-themed power-ups, New Super Mario Bros. 2 features the return of Super Leaves, which transform our pudgy hero into Raccoon Mario, a form that hasn't been seen since Super Mario Bros. 3.

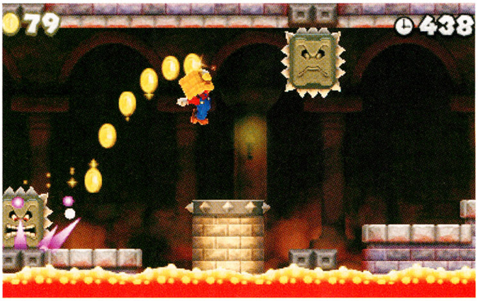
But wait, you say, weren't Super Leaves in the recent Super Mario 3D Land? They were, but in that game they transformed Mario into Tanooki Mario, who lacks Raccoon Mario's ability to perform true elevation-gaining flight after charging up from a long dash. Of course, the Tanooki Mario from Super Mario 3D Land shouldn't be mistaken for the one from Super Mario Bros. 3, who did have the power of flight. Confused yet? We are too. That's why we keep a printout of this handy chart in our wallets at all times.

MARIO FORM	APPEARS IN	POWER-UP	HOLD JUMP BUTTON TO GLIDE?	FLY UPWARDS AFTER A LONG DASH?	SWING TAIL TO ATTACK EMEMIES	TRANSFORM INTO STATUE?
	Super Mario Bros. 3, New Super Mario Bros. 2	Super Leaf	Yes	Heck Yeah!	Yes	No
	Super Mario Bros. 3	Tanooki Suit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Super Mario 3D Land	Super Leaf or Statue Leaf	Yes	No	Yes	Only with Statue Leaf



[Above] All that glitters isn't gold. But with a few well-placed stomps or fireballs, all that glitters can be turned to gold!





(Since it's local wireless play, your partner will also need an N3DS and a copy of the game). The experience is much more cooperative this time around; players can't throw each other around and knock each other off ledges as effectively as they could in New Super Mario Bros. Wii, and lives and coins are now shared between partners, with power-ups also coming in pairs. It's a great mode for veterans to play with less-experienced players, who can always jump into a bubble and glide safely through the tougher parts of a level.

The 3D effects in New Super Mario Bros. 2 are subtle—none of the levels we played had anything as impactful as the sense of depth in Super Mario 3D Land. But it does have one nice trick: Raising the 3D slider softens the background layer of the game, allowing the action on the foreground layer to pop out of the screen. It looks nice, and is easy on the eyes during extended play sessions.

GET RICH OR DIE TRYING

The New Super Mario Bros. series has always done a great job of updating the classic side-scrolling Mario experience with modern visuals, and the few levels we've had the opportunity to play certainly live up to the legacy established by the game's handheld and console predecessors. That part was no surprise—but the tense challenge of Coin Rush mode isn't something we ever expected to find in the Mario franchise. The combination of having no margin for error, a timer, and an urge to beat local records forces players to hone their platforming skills and weigh a steady stream of calculated risks in their quest to grab as many coins as possible.

Whatever your mode of choice, New Super Mario Bros. 2 will leave you dreaming of shiny, spinning coins for months to come.

x2 77
429
COURSE CLEAR!

“★★★★★”

Amazing app, and it's FREE!

by Vitsnuklz

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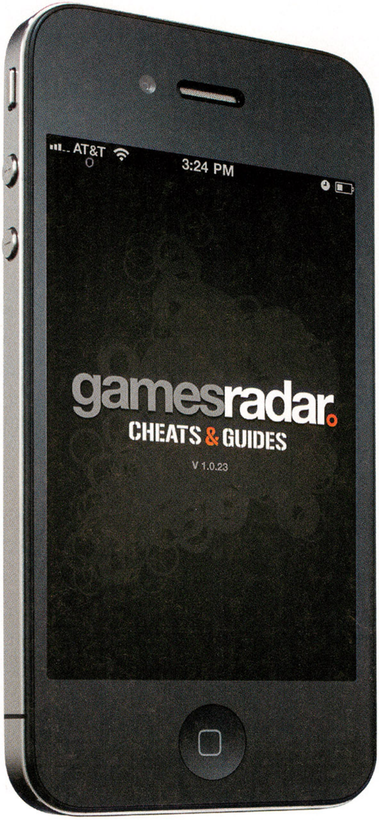

“★★★★★ GamesRadar is FULL OF WIN”

by Marcello Almaguer

“★★★★★ AWESOMESAUCE! Great app. I love!”

by June Martin

gr.

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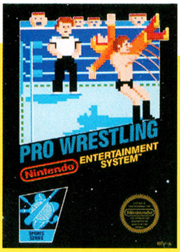
DESTINATION: 1987

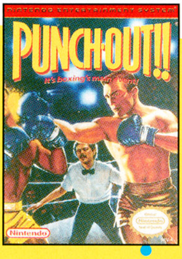
We fire up the way-back machine and warp to a totally rad time that gave birth to some of Nintendo's greatest titles.

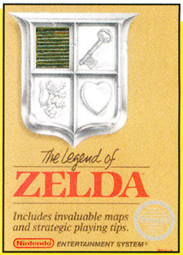
BY CHRIS HOFFMAN & PHIL THEOBALD

KID ICARUS
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
ADVENTURE SERIES


PRO WRESTLING
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
SPORTS SERIES

METROID
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
ADVENTURE SERIES


PUNCH-OUT!!
It's boxing's main event!
Nintendo


The Legend of
ZELDA
Includes invaluable maps and strategic playing tips.
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

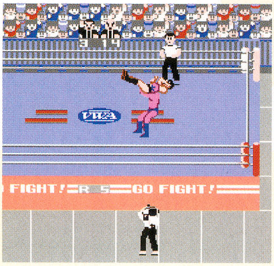
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA. Metroid. Kid Icarus. Pro Wrestling. Punch-Out!! What do those Nintendo-published games have in common, aside from being some of the most celebrated titles in the history of video gaming? All of them hit North America in 1987, a whopping 25 years ago. Sure, Nintendo has always had a track record of releasing great game after great game, but in 1987 something special was going on. With the interactive-entertainment industry still in its infancy, Nintendo had no trouble lining up one megahit after another, taking players to places they'd never been—from fantasy worlds to high-tech futures to the middle of the squared circle—and introducing them to types of gameplay they never even knew existed. An exciting time? You better believe it. To see just how exciting, we're taking a look back at these groundbreaking titles and checking out how they were covered by the Nintendo Fun Club News back in the day, as well as seeing how they've held up over the last quarter-century.

PRO WRESTLING

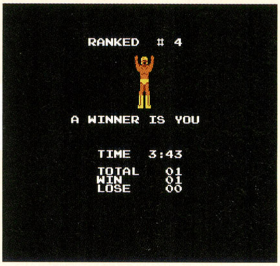
STEP INTO THE RING FOR SOME HARD-HITTING OVER-THE-TOP GRAPPLING ACTION.

MARCH 1987



WHY IT WAS A BIG DEAL:

Professional wrestling was huge in the mid 1980s, but before Pro Wrestling came out there were only a couple of other grappling titles on the NES, and they weren't very good. Despite Pro Wrestling's lack of an authentic license or familiar performers, it delivered the crazy in-ring action that fans craved. Six playable characters plus a nonplayable boss helped ensure that wrestling-mania ran wild.



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RANKED  # 4

A WINNER IS YOU

TIME   3:43

TOTAL    01
WIN      01
LOSE     00
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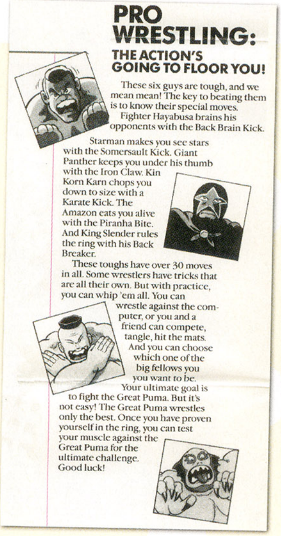
WHAT THEY SAID THEN:



PRO WRESTLING:

THE ACTION'S GOING TO FLOOR YOU!

These six guys are tough, and we mean mean! The key to beating them is to know their special moves.

Fighter Hayabusa brains his opponents with the Back Brain Kick.

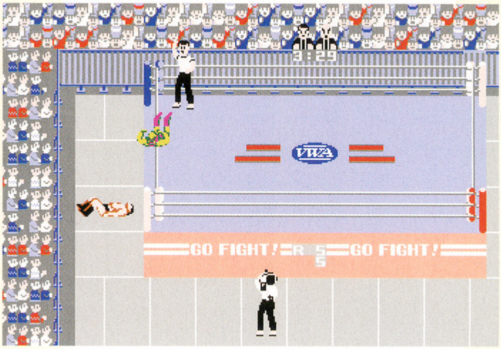
Starman makes you see stars with the Somersault Kick. Giant Panther keeps you under his thumb with the Iron Claw. Kin Korn Karn chops you down to size with a Karate Kick. The Amazon eats you alive with the Piranha Bite. And King Slender rules the ring with his Back Breaker.

These toughs have over 30 moves in all. Some wrestlers have tricks that are all their own. But with practice, you can whip 'em all. You can wrestle against the computer, or you and a friend can compete, tangle, hit the mats. And you can choose which one of the big fellows you you want to be.

Your ultimate goal is to fight the Great Puma. But it's not easy! The Great Puma wrestles only the best. Once you have proven yourself in the ring, you can test your muscle against the Great Puma for the ultimate challenge. Good luck!

WHAT WE SAY NOW:

A lot of officially licensed wrestling games tend to feel dated because of their character rosters. Not so with Pro Wrestling—the likes of The Amazon, Star Man, and Kin Corn Karn help give the game a timeless feel. Furthermore, the inclusion of personalized moves, leaping attacks from the turnbuckle, and the ability to throw your opponent out of the ring and then follow up with an over-the-ropes flying splash made Pro Wrestling way ahead of its time. Such versatility didn't become commonplace in other wrestling titles for years. Of course, Pro Wrestling also holds a special place in history because of its memorable declaration of victory: "A winner is you." It's too bad Pro Wrestling never became a franchise; many fans would love to see a modern-day update.



TIMELINE

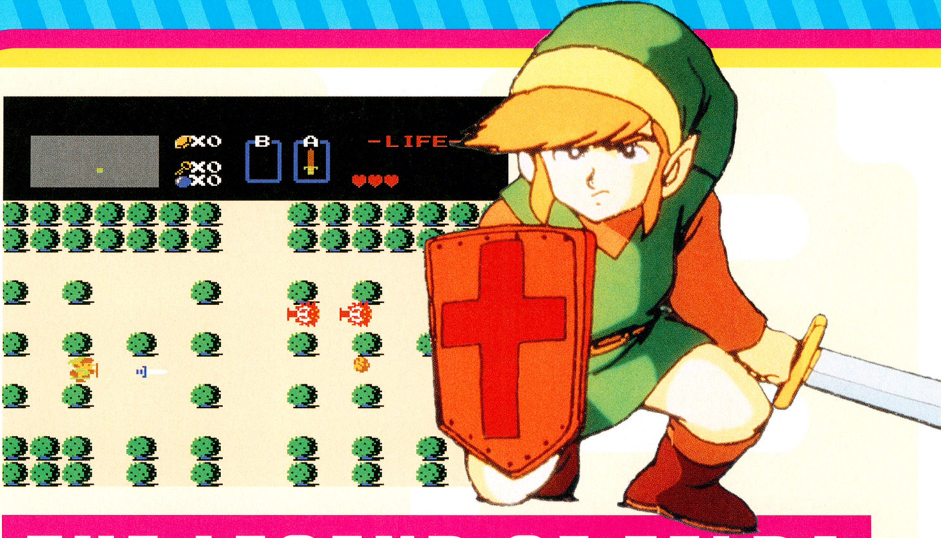
Sure, the NES was probably the hottest thing going in 1987, but it wasn't the only thing. Here's what else was poppin' 25 years ago.

January 3: Aretha Franklin becomes the first woman inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

January 5: President Ronald Reagan undergoes prostate surgery.

February: The "Batman: Year One" story debuts in *Batman* #404.

February 4: Musician Liberace passes away.



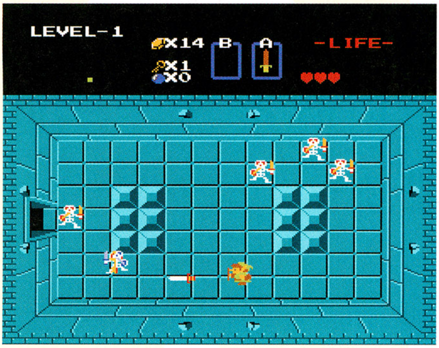
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

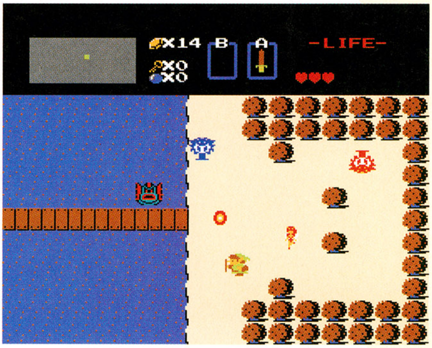
A YOUNG LAD TAKES UP A SWORD TO RESCUE A PRINCESS. THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY.

JULY 1987

WHY IT WAS A BIG DEAL:

The Legend of Zelda basically changed everything. In an era when most games were single-screen affairs or required you to move in one direction, The Legend of Zelda provided a vast nonlinear world full of exploration and choices. The game merged reflex-based action with unprecedented depth, and the high-fantasy setting let players unleash their imaginations. If nothing else, the game was hard to resist due to its shiny gold cartridge.





February 21: Actress Ellen Page (*Inception*) is born.

February 22: Artist Andy Warhol passes away.

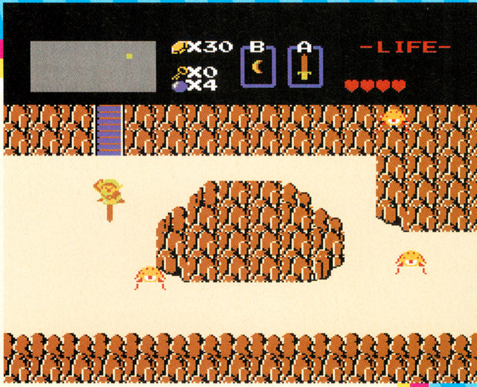
March 6: *Lethal Weapon* is released in theaters.

March 8: The final episode of *The A-Team* airs on NBC.

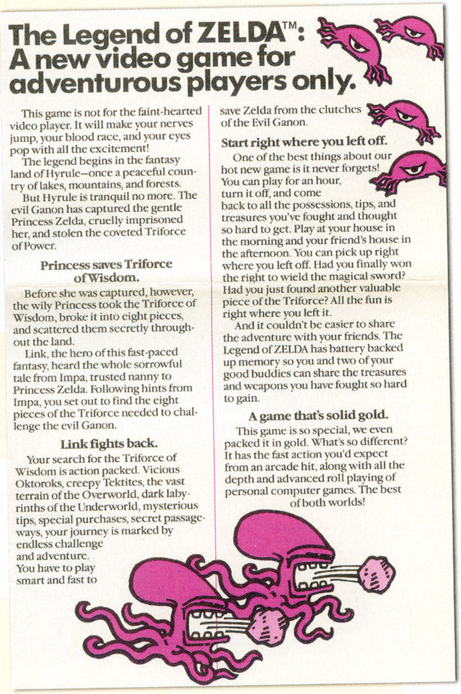
March 9: Irish rock band U2 releases *The Joshua Tree*.

March 29: WrestleMania III sets an indoor attendance record for a live sporting event at the Pontiac Silverdome in Pontiac, Michigan.

March 31: *Max Headroom* debuts on ABC.



WHAT THEY SAID THEN:



The Legend of ZELDA™: A new video game for adventurous players only.

This game is not for the faint-hearted video player. It will make your nerves jump, your blood race, and your eyes pop with all the excitement!

The legend begins in the fantasy land of Hyrule—once a peaceful country of lakes, mountains, and forests.

But Hyrule is tranquil no more. The evil Ganon has captured the gentle Princess Zelda, cruelly imprisoned her, and stolen the coveted Triforce of Power.

Princess saves Triforce of Wisdom.

Before she was captured, however, the wily Princess took the Triforce of Wisdom, broke it into eight pieces, and scattered them secretly throughout the land.

Link, the hero of this fast-paced fantasy, heard the whole sorrowful tale from Impa, trusted nanny to Princess Zelda. Following hints from Impa, you set out to find the eight pieces of the Triforce needed to challenge the evil Ganon.

Link fights back.

Your search for the Triforce of Wisdom is action packed. Vicious Oktoroks, creepy Tektites, the vast terrain of the Overworld, dark labyrinths of the Underworld, mysterious tips, special purchases, secret passageways, your journey is marked by endless challenge and adventure. You have to play smart and fast to save Zelda from the clutches of the Evil Ganon.

Start right where you left off.

One of the best things about our hot new game is it never forgets! You can play for an hour, turn it off, and come back to all the possessions, tips, and treasures you've fought and thought so hard to get. Play at your house in the morning and your friend's house in the afternoon. You can pick up right where you left off. Had you finally won the right to wield the magical sword? Had you just found another valuable piece of the Triforce? All the fun is right where you left it.

And it couldn't be easier to share the adventure with your friends. The Legend of ZELDA has battery backed up memory so you and two of your good buddies can share the treasures and weapons you have fought so hard to gain.

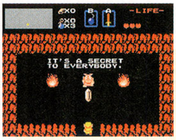
A game that's solid gold.

This game is so special, we even packed it in gold. What's so different? It has the fast action you'd expect from an arcade hit, along with all the depth and advanced roll playing of personal computer games. The best of both worlds!

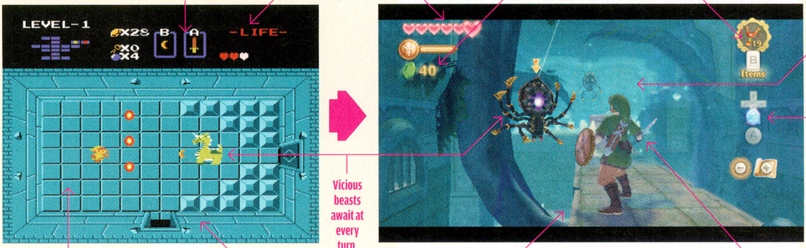
WHAT WE SAY NOW:

Even 25 years ago The Legend of Zelda was positioned as a groundbreaking epic, and it turned out to be exactly that. The formula has naturally been enhanced and refined—some might even say perfected—over the years, but it's amazing how much of the series's DNA was established with the original game. Even though the sequels are bigger, prettier, and easier to control, there's still something special about setting out into Hyrule for the first time without any tutorials to hold your hand, and just getting the chance to explore and experience a world where surprises are around every corner. There's a reason why The Legend of Zelda is one of the most beloved series of all time, and it all started right here.

LEVEL-1
X27
X1
X4
B
A
-LIFE-



EVOLUTION OF A SERIES:



You can acquire plenty of cool weapons.

The heart-based life meter hasn't changed much.

Don't forget to stock up on Rupees!

There are still plenty of cool weapons.

World are now three-dimensional and fully explorable.

Help is only a button-press away.

Vicious beasts await at every turn.

The game is played from an overhead viewpoint.

The dungeons are dank and creepy.

Link is now right-handed.

April 5: The Fox network makes its prime-time debut with *Married...with Children* and *The Tracy Ullman Show.*

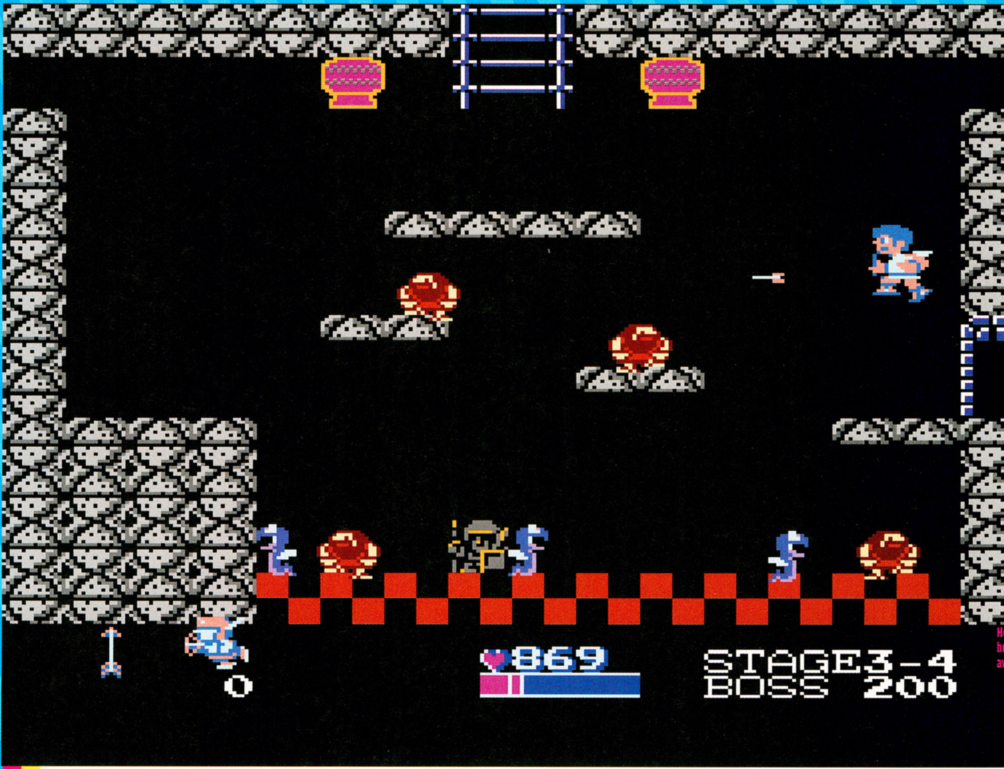
April 19: *The Simpsons* debuts as a series of animated shorts on *The Tracey Ullman Show.*

June 12: President Ronald Reagan challenges Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall.

June 22: Actor/dancer Fred Astaire passes away.

June 24: Actor/comedian Jackie Gleason passes away.

June 30: The Iran-Contra hearing interrupt US daytime television.



KID ICARUS

HIS WINGS MAY NOT WORK, BUT PIT PROVES HE CAN SOAR IN THIS MYTHOLOGICAL ADVENTURE.

JULY 1987

WHY IT WAS A BIG DEAL:

At the time of Kid Icarus's release, video games tended to stick to a single genre. Super Mario Bros. was a platformer; Gradius was a shooter; Golf was, um, golf. Kid Icarus bucked that trend by featuring multiple styles of gameplay. The game begins as a vertically scrolling platformer. Eventually you encounter Zelda-style dungeons that lend an adventure element to the festivities. Then there are side-scrolling platform stages and even a shooting stage. Variety is the spice of life, and Kid Icarus has it in spades.

July 17: *RoboCop* is released in theaters.

July 21: Guns N' Roses releases *Appetite for Destruction.*

August 31: Musician Michael Jackson releases the album *Bad.*

September 18: *Fatal Attraction* is released in theaters. It becomes the top-grossing movie of the year.

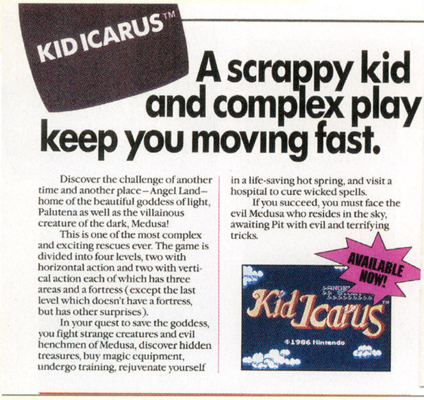
September 22: Actor Tom Felton (*Harry Potter*) is born.

September 25: *The Princess Bride* is released in theaters.

September 28: *Star Trek: The Next Generation* makes its television debut.

September 28: Actress/singer Hilary Duff (*Lizzie McGuire*) is born.

WHAT THEY SAID THEN:



KID ICARUS™

A scrappy kid and complex play keep you moving fast.

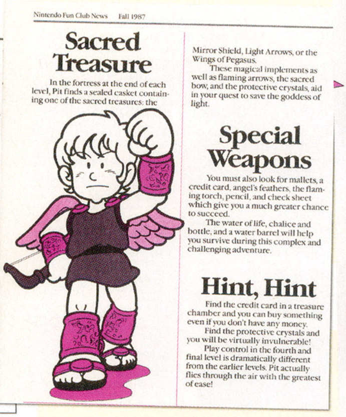
Discover the challenge of another time and another place – Angel Land – home of the beautiful goddess of light, Palutena as well as the villainous creature of the dark, Medusa!

This is one of the most complex and exciting rescues ever. The game is divided into four levels, two with horizontal action and two with vertical action each of which has three areas and a fortress (except the last level which doesn't have a fortress, but has other surprises).

In your quest to save the goddess, you fight strange creatures and evil henchmen of Medusa, discover hidden treasures, buy magic equipment, undergo training, rejuvenate yourself in a life-saving hot spring, and visit a hospital to cure wicked spells.

If you succeed, you must face the evil Medusa who resides in the sky, awaiting Pit with evil and terrifying tricks.

AVAILABLE NOW!
Kid Icarus™
©1986 Nintendo



Nintendo Fun Club News Fall 1987

Sacred Treasure

In the fortress at the end of each level, Pit finds a sealed casket containing one of the sacred treasures: the Mirror Shield, Light Arrows, or the Wings of Pegasus.

These magical implements as well as flaming arrows, the sacred bow, and the protective crystals, aid in your quest to save the goddess of light.

Special Weapons

You must also look for mallets, a credit card, angel's feathers, the flaming torch, pencil, and check sheet which give you a much greater chance to succeed.

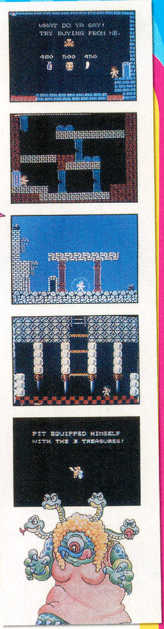
The water of life, chalice and bottle, and a water barrel will help you survive during this complex and challenging adventure.

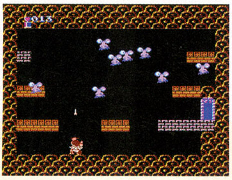
Hint, Hint

Find the credit card in a treasure chamber and you can buy something even if you don't have any money.

Find the protective crystals and you will be virtually invulnerable!

Play control in the fourth and final level is dramatically different from the earlier levels. Pit actually flies through the air with the greatest of ease!

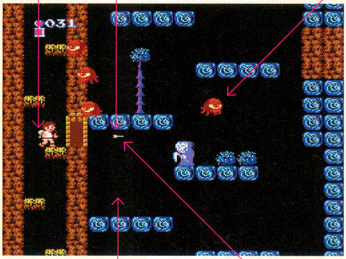




WHAT WE SAY NOW:

Although Kid Icarus is still a pretty great game, it does have a few unpleasant quirks that prevent it from being truly timeless. A backwards difficulty curve makes the game a bit frustrating, and the potential to drop through platforms to your death when ducking during the vertically scrolling stages is a notable design flaw. Despite these issues, the varied gameplay, fantastic soundtrack, and unique theme make Kid Icarus extremely enjoyable, which is probably why hardcore fans spent nearly two decades clamoring for a sequel. Their wishes finally came true earlier this year with the release of the critically acclaimed Kid Icarus: Uprising, which brought the series back to the forefront of gaming.

EVOLUTION OF A SERIES:



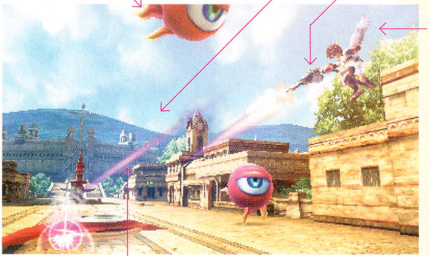
Pit's wings barely work.

The main weapon is a bow and arrows.

These darn Monoeyes just won't leave Pit alone.

Many stages are vertically oriented.

You can fire only to the side or straight up.



The world is far more open, vibrant, and vast.

Pit has a wide array of weapons to choose from.

Pit's wings allow him to fly... with a little help from the goddess Palutena.

Touch-screen controls let you aim wherever you want.

October: Marvel debuts the "Kraven's Last Hunt" story in *Web of Spider-Man* #31.

October 16: America watches on TV as 18-month-old Jessica McClure is rescued from a well in Midland, Texas.

October 18: Actor Zac Efron (*High School Musical*) is born.

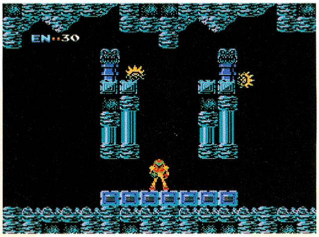
November 28: Actress Karen Gillian (*Doctor Who*) is born.

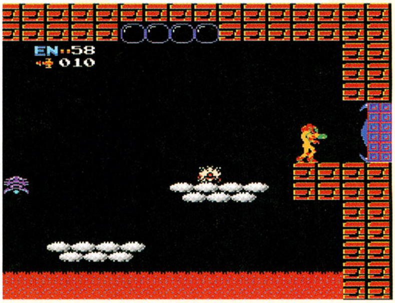
December 9: Microsoft releases Windows 2.0.

December 18: *The Last Emperor* is released in theaters. It goes on to win the Academy Award for Best Picture.

December: The *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cartoon debuts on TV.

X





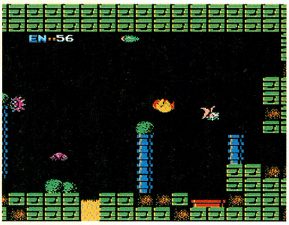
METROID

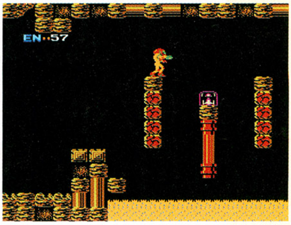
SIDE-SCROLLING SCI-FI ACTION MEETS NONLINEAR EXPLORATION. A LEGEND IS BORN.

AUGUST 1987

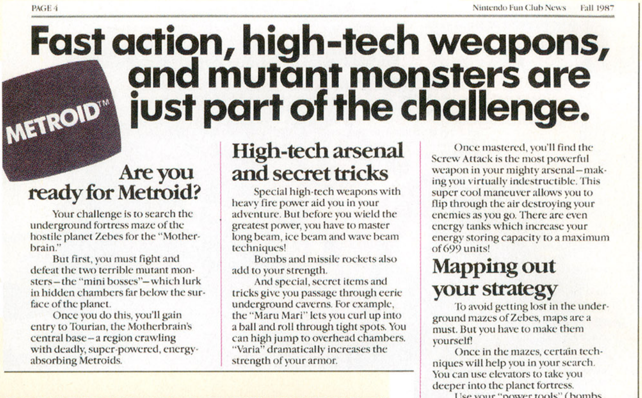
WHY IT WAS A BIG DEAL:

Part platformer, part shooter, and part adventure, Metroid mixed things up and challenged players' notions of what to expect from console video games. The blending of genres wasn't completely unlike what players saw in The Legend of Zelda (which also seamlessly merged action and exploration), but Metroid carved a niche all its own thanks to its sci-fi setting and butt-kicking bounty-hunter hero.





WHAT THEY SAID THEN:



PAGE 4 Nintendo Fun Club News Fall 1987

Fast action, high-tech weapons, and mutant monsters are just part of the challenge.

METROID™

Are you ready for Metroid?

Your challenge is to search the underground fortress maze of the hostile planet Zebes for the "Motherbrain."

But first, you must fight and defeat the two terrible mutant monsters – the "mini bosses" – which lurk in hidden chambers far below the surface of the planet.

Once you do this, you'll gain entry to Tourian, the Motherbrain's central base – a region crawling with deadly, super-powered, energy-absorbing Metroids.

High-tech arsenal and secret tricks

Special high-tech weapons with heavy fire power aid you in your adventure. But before you wield the greatest power, you have to master long beam, ice beam and wave beam techniques!

Bombs and missile rockets also add to your strength.

And special, secret items and tricks give you passage through eerie underground caverns. For example, the "Maru Mari" lets you curl up into a ball and roll through tight spots. You can high jump to overhead chambers. "Varia" dramatically increases the strength of your armor.

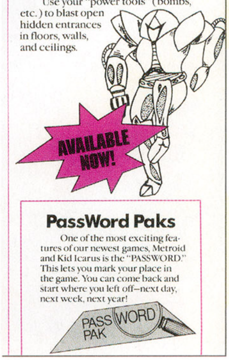
Once mastered, you'll find the Screw Attack is the most powerful weapon in your mighty arsenal – making you virtually indestructible. This super cool maneuver allows you to flip through the air destroying your enemies as you go. There are even energy tanks which increase your energy storing capacity to a maximum of 699 units!

Mapping out your strategy

To avoid getting lost in the underground mazes of Zebes, maps are a must. But you have to make them yourself!

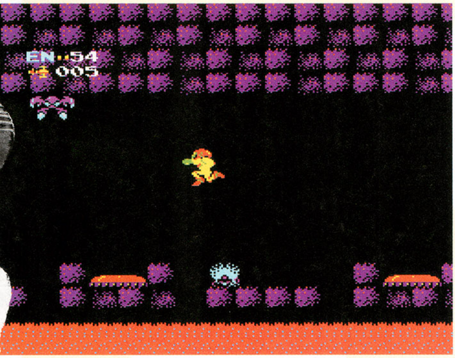
Once in the mazes, certain techniques will help you in your search. You can use elevators to take you deeper into the planet fortress.

Use your "power tools" (bombs, etc.) to blast open hidden entrances in floors, walls, and ceilings.



PassWord Paks

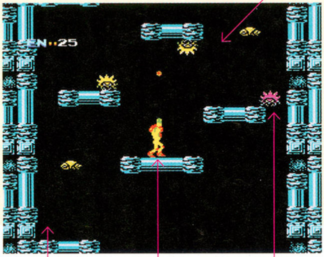
One of the most exciting features of our newest games, Metroid and Kid Icarus is the "PASSWORD." This lets you mark your place in the game. You can come back and start where you left off—next day, next week, next year!



WHAT WE SAY NOW:

The Metroid formula is simply one of the best in gaming. Earning new powers and upgrading your strength to access new areas of an open-ended, action-packed game world is nothing short of genius, and it's proven to be fun through numerous sequels (as well as other games that have borrowed the same formula, such as many of Konami's Castlevania titles). However, Metroid shows its age more than some classics released in 1987, due in no small part to its lack of a built-in map feature. Sure, drawing your own maps was the thing to do 25 years ago, but these days a game without a map feature is a crime. (Good thing Metroid's GBA remake, Metroid: Zero Mission, corrects this flaw.) Of course, no mention of the game would be complete without recognizing that it gave us Samus Aran, one of the first (and still one of the best) strong female video game characters.

EVOLUTION OF A SERIES:

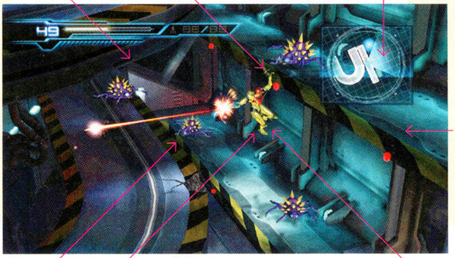


Environments are moody and atmospheric.

Strictly a side-view perspective.

Back in 1987, most players didn't know who was inside the suit.

Zoomers are weak but they keep causing trouble.



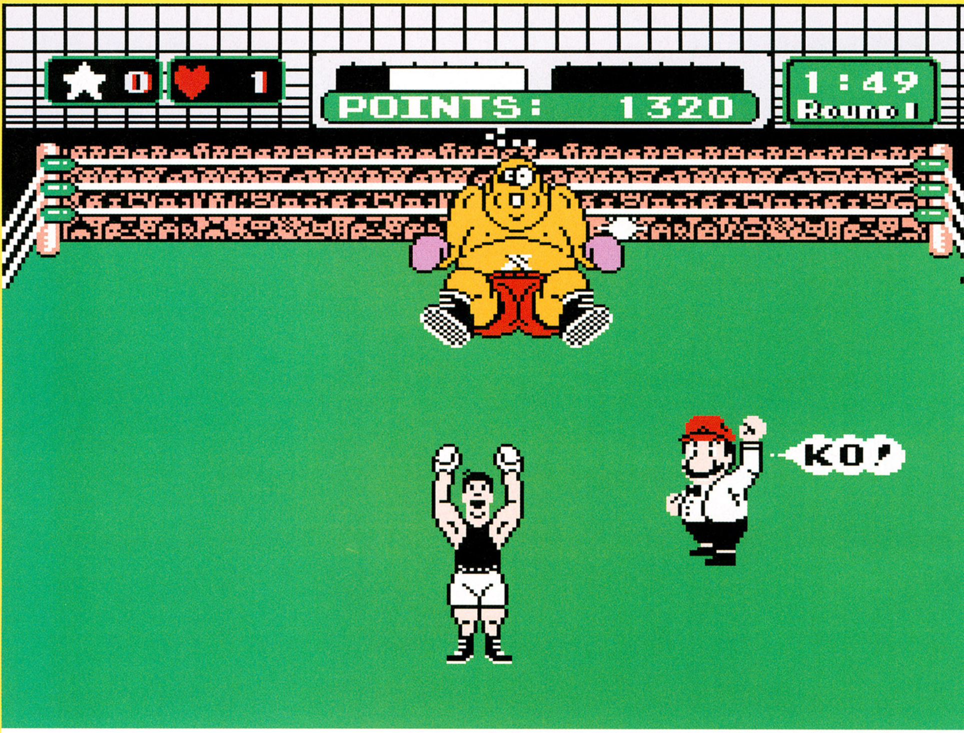
Samus can now grab ledges and perform lots of additional moves.

A handy map makes sure that you don't get lost.

Dynamic camera angles keep things interesting.

These days everybody knows that Samus is a total hottie.

Samus hasn't changed her look much after all these years.



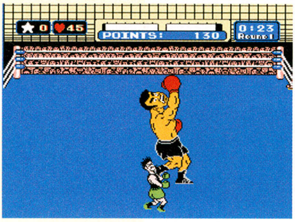
PUNCH-OUT!!

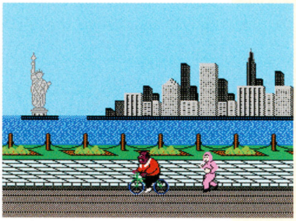
YOU'LL NEED SPEED, SKILL, TIMING, AND BRAINS TO BECOME THE WVBA CHAMP.

OCTOBER 1987

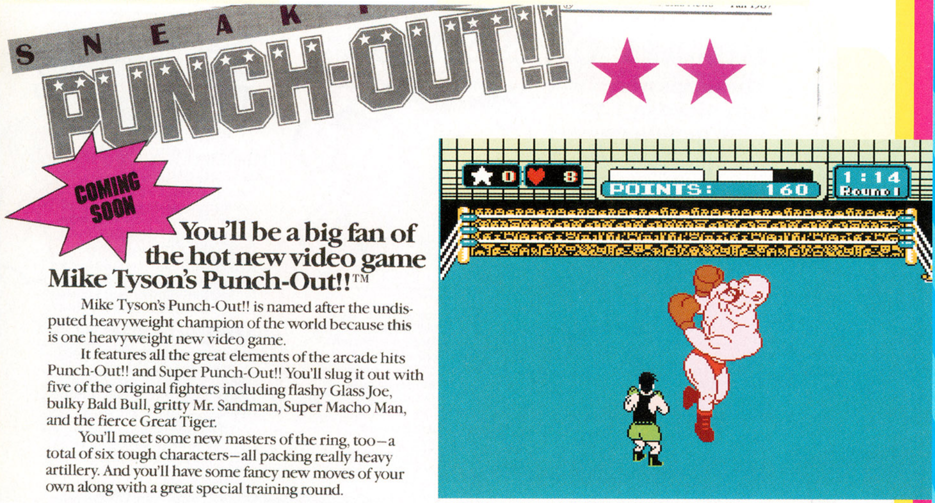
WHY IT WAS A BIG DEAL:

There were a lot of reasons to be excited about Punch-Out!! For one thing, it was an NES adaptation of a hit arcade game. For another, the 1987 version was endorsed by one of the biggest names in sports. Furthermore, there were very few boxing games on the NES, and what could be better than one created by Nintendo itself? When it came to sports games, Punch-Out!! was about as big as it could get.





WHAT THEY SAID THEN:



SNEAK

PUNCH-OUT!!

COMING SOON

You'll be a big fan of the hot new video game Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!™

Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! is named after the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world because this is one heavyweight new video game.

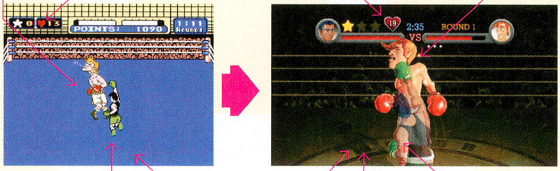
It features all the great elements of the arcade hits Punch-Out!! and Super Punch-Out!! You'll slug it out with five of the original fighters including flashy Glass Joe, bulky Bald Bull, gritty Mr. Sandman, Super Macho Man, and the fierce Great Tiger.

You'll meet some new masters of the ring, too—a total of six tough characters—all packing really heavy artillery. And you'll have some fancy new moves of your own along with a great special training round.

WHAT WE SAY NOW:

Punch-Out!! might hold up better than any other game in this article. Admittedly, it's not a very true-to-life representation of the sport (you can't even move around the ring, for Pete's sake), but that straightforward simplicity really allows you to focus on watching your opponent, learning his tells, and figuring out exactly when to dodge, duck, or counter. Unlike some tenured series, Punch-Out!! releases have been few and far between, and though they've all been fantastic, it's hard to say that the gameplay has really improved all that much—the original NES game was just that darn good. It's no wonder that performers still make Punch-Out!! references on TV or that it was one of the first NES games to hit the Nintendo eShop.

EVOLUTION OF A SERIES:



Glass Joe doesn't put up much of a fight.

Stars indicate your ability to throw special punches. Hearts represent your stamina.

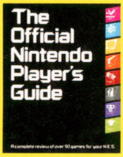
Glass Joe still doesn't put up much of a fight.

These 2D character sprites were considered massive back in 1987!

The perspective is remarkably similar.

Shadows add an extra bit of authenticity.

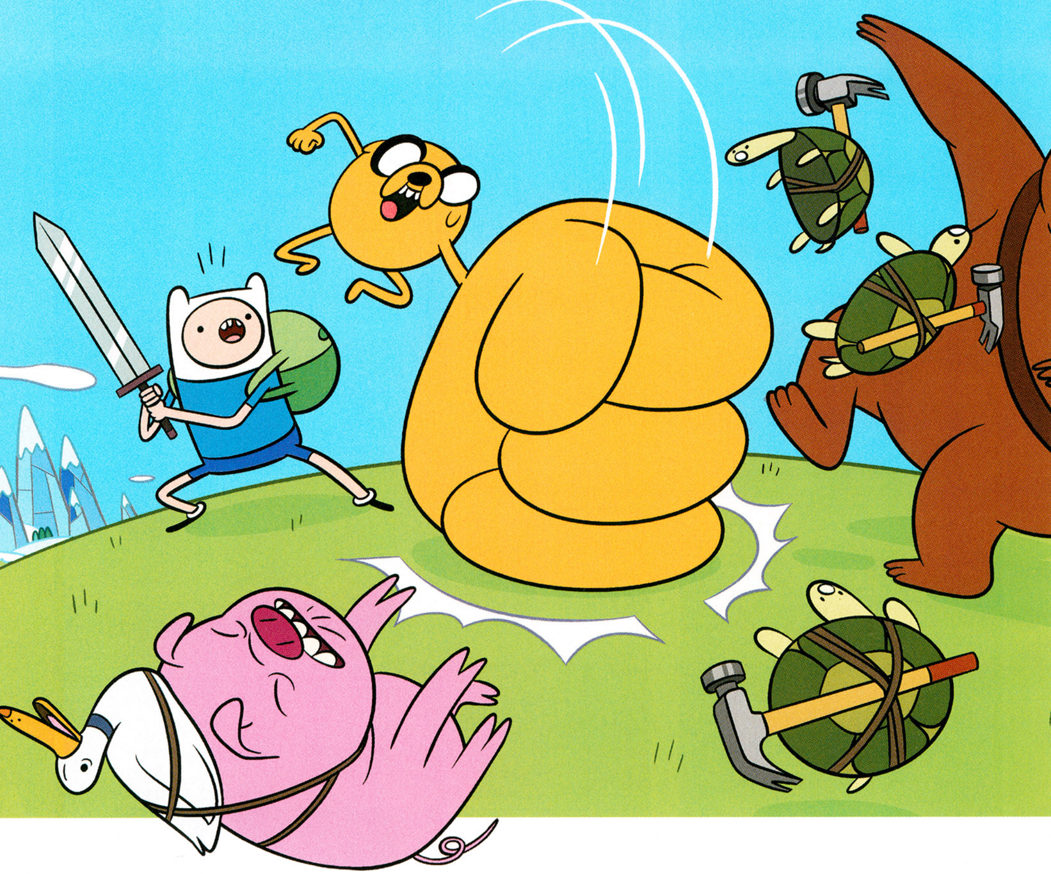
Characters are now rendered in 3D, and they're larger than ever.



The Official Nintendo Player's Guide
A complete review of over 90 games for your N.E.S.

REQUIRED READING

Back in 1987 there was no Nintendo Power. There was no public Internet. If you wanted to be in the know about what Nintendo had on offer, there was only one option: The Official Nintendo Player's Guide. For neophyte gamers, this paperback was a holy tome, packed cover to cover with maps, tips, and information on the NES's biggest hits, from Super Mario Bros. to Punch-Out!! to The Legend of Zelda to Castlevania. Even if you didn't own all of the games covered in the book, it was marvelous to flip through the pages and stare at the wondrous worlds that were but a Game Pak away. There was even a section detailing Zelda II—more than a year before the game hit North America. The guide was just one of many reasons that 1987 was a great year for gaming.



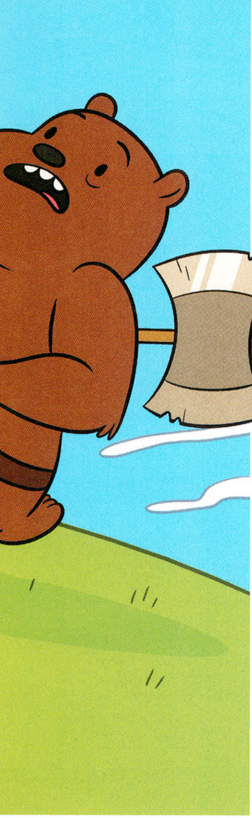
C'mon, Grab Your Friends

Slamacow! Finn and Jake make their video game debut in *Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!*

ILLUSTRATED BY PHIL RYNDA, FORMER LEAD CHARACTER DESIGNER FOR ADVENTURE TIME.

BY **PHIL THEOBALD**

PUBLISHER: **D3PUBLISHER** DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD** RELEASE: **FALL 2012** **N3DS** **DS**

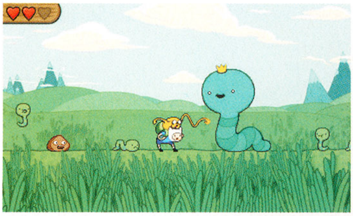


With its youthful, sword-swinging/punch-throwing hero, shape-shifting sidekick, whimsical environments, bizarre monsters, and troublesome king with a penchant for kidnapping princesses, *Adventure Time* seems a natural for making the transition from TV to video game. We're clearly not the only ones who think so, as D3Publisher has teamed up with developer WayForward and *Adventure Time*'s creator, Pendleton Ward, to bring the hit Cartoon Network series to the Nintendo 3DS and Nintendo DS handhelds. Ward first teased the game a few months back on his Twitter account, but details have been scarce since. We talked to WayForward's James Montagna and Matt Bozon (the game's director and designer, respectively) to get the full scoop on this fall's elaborately titled Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!

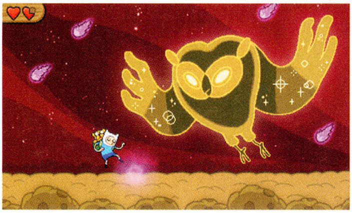
If you're unfamiliar with the animated series, here's the lowdown: it chronicles the adventures of two best friends, Finn (the human) and Jake (the dog) in the magical land of Ooo. Using their strength, wits, and Jake's ability to change his size and shape, the pair faces off against a myriad of bizarre enemies, including their most persistent foe, the Ice King. Of course, his frosty Highness isn't really evil; he just doesn't understand that Ooo's many princesses aren't likely to fall in love with him once he's locked them in his dungeon. When they're not battling, Finn and Jake can often be seen in the company of their friends Princess Bubblegum; Marceline the Vampire Queen; and Jake's girlfriend, Lady Rainicorn.

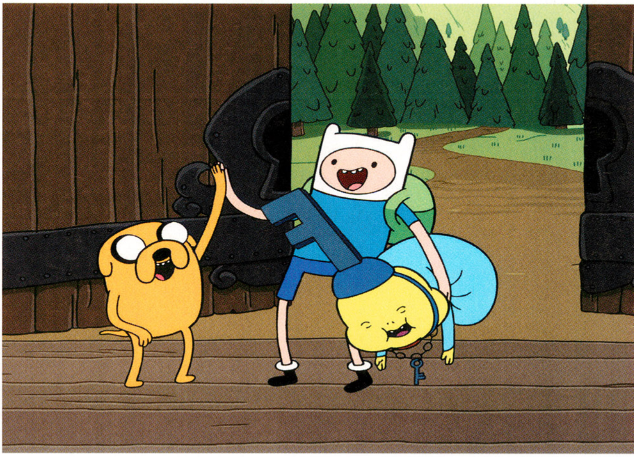
Perhaps the most obvious question about ATHIKWYSOG (hmm...that abbreviation might not work) is what type of game one would make out of those characters and situations. Although there was talk early on about making a puzzle platformer or a brawler, the decision was ultimately made to stay true to the show's title and create an adventure game. When asked about the game's inspiration, Bozon says, "We looked at classic Zelda, Castlevania, Mega Man, Metroid, and other series that have inspired our staff over the years. We decided that something like Zelda 2: The Adventure of Link was the common ground. Because of this our top-view areas focus on quests and exploration, and the side view combines combat with platforming."

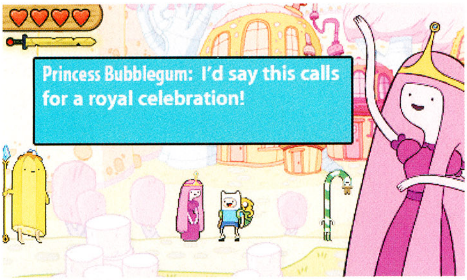
The game's original storyline is the brainchild of Pendleton Ward, and it's just as irreverent as any given episode of the cartoon. Montagna elaborates, "The idea came from Pen to have the Ice King stealing Finn



[Above] Even giant, crown-wearing enemy worms are no match for a dog with stretchable limbs.

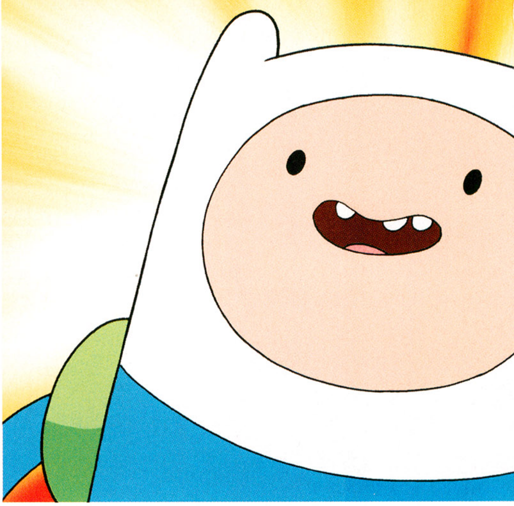






Princess Bubblegum: I'd say this calls for a royal celebration!

[Above] In true adventure game style, Finn and Jake will occasionally wander into towns to chat with their citizens (or their royal rulers in PB's case).



and Jake's garbage, and the two of them seeking to get it back out of principle. It's pretty much the makings of the best story ever told, right? So, we absolutely had to run with it. We've been working with Pen to fill out the rest of what happens on Finn and Jake's journey."

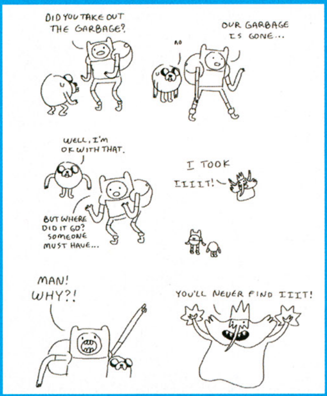
Because Finn and Jake are such buddies, the player will control the two of them together as a single unit. Each one, however, has his own set of attacks. Jake in particular adds quite a bit of technique to the gameplay with his unique shape-shifting ability. Montagna explains how Jake's powers work: "Jake chills out in Finn's backpack, but will pop out to attack enemies in ways that Finn can't. But Jake also uses his powers to help outside of battle. Players will earn new shapes that Jake can transform into. On the Ooo world map, Jake can stretch to these forms to help Finn reach new areas. I imagine people might be like, 'Hey, couldn't he just transform into those things anyway?' Over the course of the game, Jake is learning different songs that remind him of what sorts of things he can turn into. If you play the song for him, it'll trigger a spark of inspiration like, 'That's right...I could become a boat!'"

While the main action is occurring on the top screen of the N3DS or DS, the lower screen, representing Finn's backpack, will serve a variety of uses. Players will be able to access the duo's individual stats, their inventory, a map of Ooo, and the game's unusual health-recovery system. Like many video game characters, Finn and Jake eat food to recover health, but you can enhance their food with a variety of condiments. Mixing and matching different foods will create new treats, and something that sounds gross in real life could result in a massive HP boost in the game.

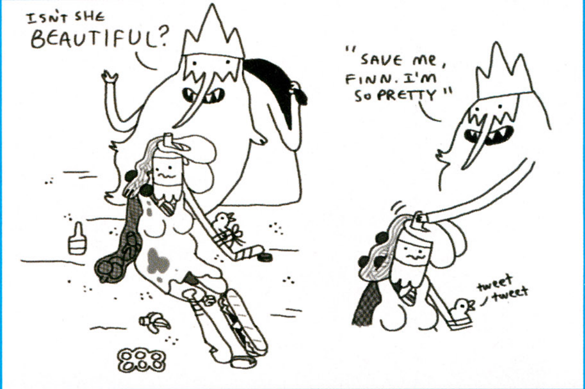
Finn and Jake are, of course, the game's stars, but expect to see plenty of the show's secondary

KINDA SKETCHY

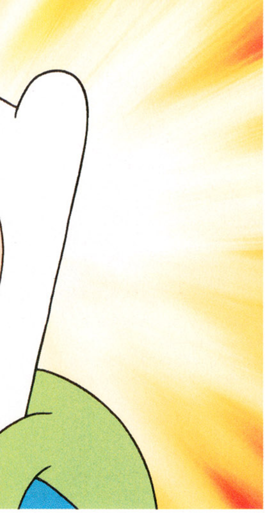
As a cartoonist, it's no surprise that Pendleton Ward would make use of his art skills when helping WayForward design the Adventure Time game. Here are some of the concepts that are helping to shape the final product.

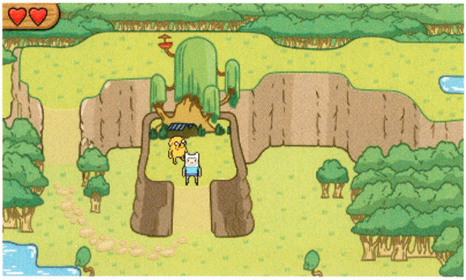

DID YOU TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE?
OUR GARBAGE IS GONE...
NO
WELL, I'M OK WITH THAT.
I TOOK IIIIT!
BUT WHERE DID IT GO? SOMEONE MUST HAVE...
MAN! WHY?!
YOU'LL NEVER FIND IIIIT!

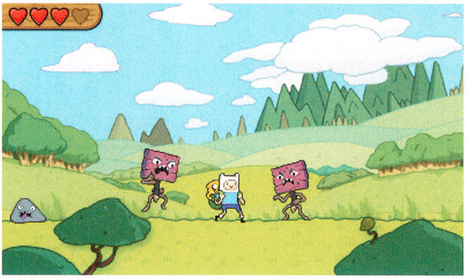
ORIGINS: The game's premise is a simple one—the Ice King has stolen Finn and Jake's trash, and Finn wants vengeance!



THANK YOU, FINN! BUT OUR PRINCESS IS MADE OF TRASH!: The Ice King does love the princesses, but his Garbage Princess creations might be taking it too far. So sad. So very sad.





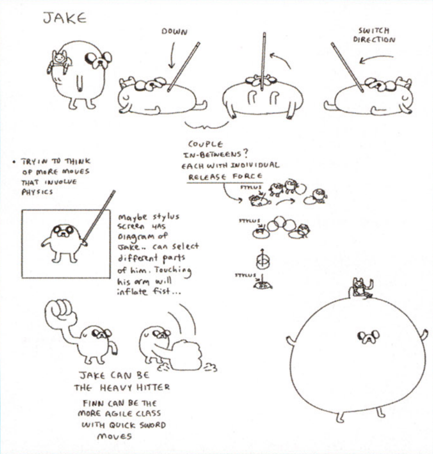


characters make appearances as well. Given the creative talent behind the game, however, it certainly won't be a simple rehash of the show. Montagna assures us, "It seems like almost every episode introduces someone new, so the game will have that going on too! There are some hilarious designs that came from Pen, actually. For instance, we have enemies that have been crudely fashioned by the Ice King himself. I don't wanna spoil anything though! I'm really excited about players coming across these things in the game!"

Pendleton Ward has been intimately involved since the start of the project, working on the game's script as well as specific design details. Bozon shares more about Ward's contributions: "He's a reserved guy on the surface, but quickly jumps in to write dialogue, draw enemies, or ask how our tech works or how his offbeat ideas can be best achieved. He's wise beyond years in managing the creative process in regards to deadlines, design, and the wide variety of personalities that come into play. And he talks just like his characters do, which makes meetings pretty amusing." Montagna continues, "It's cool to have the world's greatest expert on the series available to advise us. He can easily make recommendations like 'Hey, if you need a character that would make a good shopkeeper, use Choose Goose,' or provide ideal alternatives to characters and settings we might suggest. In a lot of ways, it's unprecedented to have the creator of a license be so excited to contribute, and it's safe to say that an immense amount of care is being taken in crafting this game [by] all parties involved."

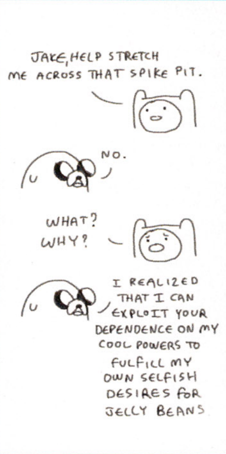
And Ward's participation isn't the only factor working in the game's favor. The creative team at WayForward is composed of huge fans of the series, and they are dedicated to making the game as true to the cartoon as possible. Expect plenty of the show's humor and Finn and Jake's trademark banter. The developers are also keen on sneaking in cameos by some of the show's more-obscure characters, so *Adventure Time* devotees will have lots to look out for. WayForward knows that fans will be expecting a lot from the game, and they're committed to delivering. Montagna emphasizes, "It's important to us that we meet many of these expectations, but even more important to surprise players with something they wouldn't have imagined." Bozon reiterates the point and gives us additional hope for the future when he says, "With the show being so popular, I'm certain there will be many more *Adventure Time* games to come. We don't want to retell the entire series in game form. That said, we've been reading a lot of wish lists online and we're feeling pretty good about the whole dealio."

After talking with WayForward and seeing the first screenshots of Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!, we're feeling pretty good about the whole dealio, too.



JAKE
DOWN
SWITCH DIRECTION
COUPLE IN-BETWEENS? EACH WITH INDIVIDUAL RELEASE FORCE
• TRYIN TO THINK OF MORE MOVES THAT INVOLVE PHYSICS
STYLUS
STYLUS
STYLUS
Maybe stylus screen HAS DIAGRAM of Jake.. can select different parts of him. Touching his arm will inflate fist...
JAKE CAN BE THE HEAVY HITTER
FINN CAN BE THE MORE AGILE CLASS WITH QUICK SWORD MOVES

JAKE GETS A WORKOUT: This sketch features a few concepts for ways to manipulate Jake's abilities with the stylus. He's a powerful pooch.



JAKE, HELP STRETCH ME ACROSS THAT SPIKE PIT.
NO.
WHAT? WHY?
I REALIZED THAT I CAN EXPLOIT YOUR DEPENDENCE ON MY COOL POWERS TO FULFILL MY OWN SELFISH DESIRES FOR JELLY BEANS

GREED: Jake's not above poking a little fun at WayForward's A Boy and His Blob.

The Candy King

There are plenty of talented people behind the *Adventure Time* cartoon, but the boss of them all is animator Pendleton Ward, the creator of Finn and Jake (in fact, Finn's name was originally Pen). We chatted with Ward and James Montagna, the director of Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!, to get a deeper look at how a cartoon series becomes an out-of-the-ordinary game.

NINTENDO POWER Are you a video gamer yourself?
PENDLETON WARD Yeah, I consider myself a hardcore gamer.

How long have you been playing?
PENDLETON WARD Since [the NES], but only recently have I committed myself to a gamer's lifestyle of buying every game and being in the know of what's happening in the video game industry. I want to make games; I'm really interested in making games, and I think that video games are still an untapped medium for story. I feel like they're still in their infancy as far as how much potential they have with reaching an audience. It's just interactive storytelling. So, I don't know, I'm excited about games; I like games a lot.

Do you feel that a game could be a more effective way of storytelling than, say, animation? Or is it perhaps just a different kind? How do you see that?
PENDLETON WARD Hmmm...I don't know about effective, it's just a new way to tell a story that I don't think has been explored as deeply as any other medium. I don't know—there's a certain niche of people who enjoy games, and I feel like games are targeted towards—right now in my head I'm just thinking about shooters and how many shooters there are. But games have so much potential. Now I'm thinking about Second Life, where you can create anything in the world and it's completely customizable. I wouldn't want to make Second Life, but I feel like Second Life—wait, there's no story in Second Life. I don't know why I brought that up. [Laughs] I'm just thinking about the potential of games because you can do almost anything. When I was playing the new Doom, I was playing at night with the lights off, and with the computer monitor right in my face with my headphones on really loud. In my apartment, I was living with five other guys—this is while I was in college—and everyone was asleep. I'd be playing, and then I'd be like, "Ahh!" and then, "I'm sorry!" and wake up everyone, and then keep going, "Ahhhh! I'm sorry, everybody!" But what I'm trying to get to is that there's a section of the game where you're just sort of walking through corridors. There wasn't anything attacking you, but every now and then you'd see a silhouette pass across a window, or you'd hear really loud banging sounds, which were creating mood and suspense. What's cool about games is that you're pushing the W key [or controller buttons], which is driving you forward through the story. It makes it even more suspenseful—it puts me on the edge of my seat. I like the idea that the player is moving through a scary movie. I don't know; I'm just rambling now.

What are some of your favorite games?
PENDLETON WARD I like Minecraft a lot.... I like exploring open worlds, and Minecraft had all that. It was also so simple; there's no direction when you first start playing Minecraft unless you seek it out online. There aren't instructions; you just have to click buttons until you figure it out. I like that, so I like Minecraft a lot. I just started playing Fez, the game by Phil Fish, which is an Xbox downloadable. That's a lot of fun; it's a puzzle game with really cute pixel art. So that's to name a couple, I guess.

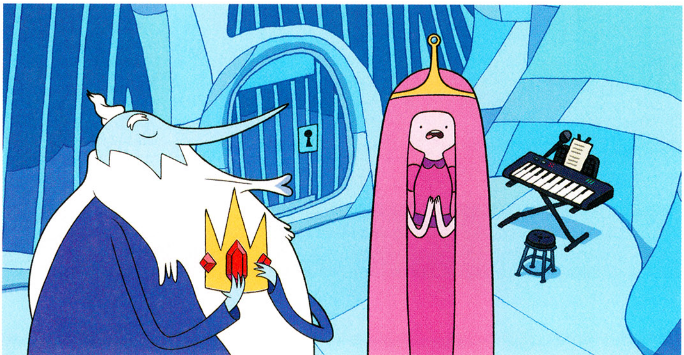
What is your involvement in the development of the game?
PENDLETON WARD I wrote a really rough draft of the script for the game, and then James helped me fill in all of the gaps because I left out a bunch of pieces to it. But I'm going to keep working on the script, and I'd like to write all of the dialogue. James, you can help me out too if that's cool.
JAMES MONTAGNA Pen's actually been involved from the start. We worked together to figure out initial gameplay content, and from there he provided story ideas and hilarious enemy designs. Actually, I almost burst out laughing during one of our important phone conferences because I was skimming through the script draft that Pen gave us. There's just great stuff in there.

Are any of the other writers or artists of the show involved with the game, or is it just you?
PENDLETON WARD No, it's just me. I'm taking some personal time to work on it just because I enjoy games so much. Everyone else is just working on the show; no one has time to really take on any extra work.

How are you enjoying working with WayForward? Were you familiar with their games?
PENDLETON WARD I played A Boy and His Blob for Wii, which I really liked a lot. I think they're great, and they've got a lot of original stuff on their roster of games, which I think is really rad. And I think they're also really passionate about their game-making. We really hit it off when I was talking to them for the first time, and I connected with them really well as far as our love of games and what we wanted to put in the game. So I'm stoked.

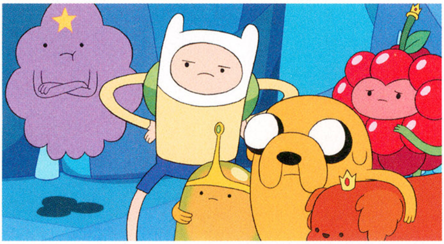
What do you think fans of the *Adventure Time* series have to look forward to in this game?
JAMES MONTAGNA On WayForward's end, we're just a bunch of really obsessive *Adventure Time* fans too. So we're making a point to provide things that the enthusiasts will really flip out over, like fan-favorite characters and references to things they've seen, as well as new surprises.

How is coming up with a storyline for a video game different from coming up with a plot for an episode? Or is there a difference?
PENDLETON WARD Well, I haven't noticed a difference. But WayForward is also helping me with the story—they gave me a sort of outline to follow as far as how the



story is going to work and where the characters need to go. I just try to logic in how the characters would react to every situation. I guess I haven't noticed very much of a difference since I'm just writing funny dialogue within the constraints of not adding too many additional assets to the story. Every time I add a new prop or make a change to sell a joke, that's an additional asset. So I'm just working with some of those boundaries and trying to make something that's simple and funny at the same time.

Are you considering this game to be in canon with the series?
PENDLETON WARD Yeah, it's in line with how an episode would play out. So yes, I guess so. It's a pretty simple storyline right now. [Ice King] sneaks into their house and takes their garbage, and they're like, "What? Give us back our garbage!" And Jake's like, "Well, I don't mind him taking out our garbage," but Finn explains that it's the principle and that he needs to stop coming into their house. So they chase after him, and Ice King has a lot of fun and games with Finn by creating princesses out of garbage, which is a Mario reference. He puts these trash princesses at the end of levels and asks you to save them, but you really just want to hit him because he's being a jerk. [Laughs] So there's a lot of that, and then we'll switch it up with some unexpected twists.



Finn and Jake feel like they transition naturally into the roles of video game heroes, but how do the rest of the show's characters fit into that role?
JAMES MONTAGNA Those characters are there, and they do have roles that are as close as possible to what happens in the show. Actually, some characters may show up in unexpected roles, so you'll have to look forward to that.

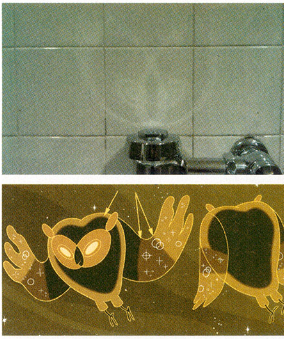
Pen—a while ago on your Twitter account, you posted a bunch of ideas that you had for an Adventure Time game, such as an Animal Crossing–style game, or something like Monster Hunter or Katamari. Were you able to incorporate any of those ideas into this game, or was that something completely different?
PENDLETON WARD That's something completely different.
JAMES MONTAGNA I think one of the challenges was paring down so many ideas that we had into something that would work within the context of the game. It's been a lot of fun, but there are just so many great ideas. I think that's one of the awesome things about being able to tap into Pen's creativity as well—we just have so many ideas.

How difficult was it to pick and choose ideas like that? As you said, there were so many different ideas that seemed like they would work really well.
JAMES MONTAGNA It was a challenge. Pen had a number of concepts for how he'd like to approach designing an *Adventure Time* game, and we researched choices for the types of games that we look at and that sort of thing. We kind of worked together to zero in on the experience that we wanted to provide. That took a lot of back and forth and trying different things to see what worked, and we found a common ground in something that's stylistically similar to Zelda II for NES.

How difficult is it to make a video game funny?
PENDLETON WARD Hmmm...this is going to sound very egotistical, but it's not very difficult. I'm just writing jokes the way that I know how to do it. I always feel confident that I can make something funny. Every story's been told, I think. And in the beginning of *Adventure Time*, I was seeing a lot of premises that felt like classic and cliché stories. But in the show, we'd just turn them on their head because we would approach them differently. I would just put myself in the shoes of the characters; like I'd put myself in the shoes of Papa Smurf dealing with Gargamel, and imagine what I would actually tell Gargamel. I'd tell Gargamel to please knock it off; you know, you're scaring my friends, and we're going to attack you while you're sleeping if you don't stop it. And you have to sleep sometime. I don't know; I'm just making this up right now, but that's how I approach any story—just put myself in the shoes of the character and see the situation that they're in, and then try to make light of it. Because that's how I live my life—by making light of everything.

Is there one secret about *Adventure Time* that nobody knows that you would share with us?
PENDLETON WARD Oh my gosh. That nobody knows? Well, the first thing that comes to mind is the Cosmic Owl, who's only seen in a couple episodes; he was in one of the very first episodes, "Prisoners of Love." He's the owl that Ice King sees when he gets knocked out by Finn—Ice King goes to this cosmic place and the owl calls him a sociopath. I don't know if you remember that, but anyway, Cosmic Owl's character design is based off of how the light from the ceiling reflects off the urinal in the men's restroom at Cartoon Network. The light hits the top of the metallic piece on the urinal, and bounces off and then hits the wall, which creates two oval shapes that are interlocking. I always noticed it when I was using the restroom. [Laughs] And then I went into my friend Adam's office and saw a sketch on his table, and he had drawn an owl with those eyes. I was like, "What? That looks really familiar, man." And he was like, "Yeah? You recognize it? Yeah?" So then I was like, "That's from the bathroom! Let's put it in an episode."

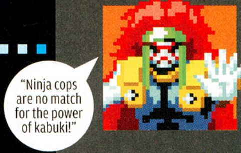
If you weren't at all constrained by system specs, budget, time, or any other factors that you would normally worry about while developing a video game, what would your dream Adventure Time game be?
PENDLETON WARD Golly. Well, I wouldn't want to make—I think I've said in the past, "Well of course I'd make Oblivion!" But I don't think I'd want to make Oblivion. I would try to make something compact. Like something that was really tightly organized and simplified, if that makes sense. I would just try to make something innovative, and try to reinvent the wheel a little bit. I don't know; I have no idea. Well, if you've ever played Barney's game [Barney's Hide & Seek Game] for Sega Genesis—I was in college and played it and said, "This is amazing!" He's not doing anything; there's no goal. He's just finding things, like he's trying to find a balloon or a trash can. And sometimes he finds a kid hanging out behind a tree, and the kid runs away, so he's like, "Woohoo!" and he just jumps around. I think that's really fun, and I think I would start there. If I had all of the money in the world, I would start with the Barney game for Sega Genesis.



[Above] Artistic inspiration can come from the strangest places.

This is probably the one question that the fans are most concerned about: we know this game is coming to the DS and Nintendo 3DS, but is there any chance that it will be ported to BMO at some point?
PENDLETON WARD Yes, absolutely.

NINTENDO POWER That's the important part, really; we want to make sure that Finn and Jake will be able to play the game.
JAMES MONTAGNA We've got our BMO dev kits over here at WayForward. [Laughs]
PENDLETON WARD There are actually functional BMOs online that people have modded out of different handheld devices.

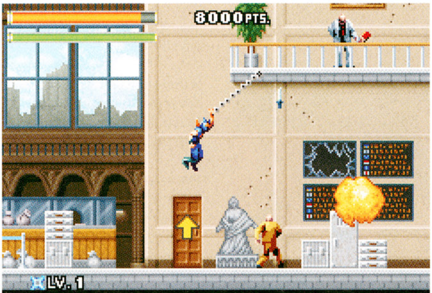

"Ninja cops are no match for the power of kabuki!"

NINJA FIVE-O
GAME BOY ADVANCE
KONAMI

Ninja Five-O

To serve and protect and slice up bank robbers with a katana

PLATFORM: **GAME BOY ADVANCE**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
RELEASE: **APRIL 2003**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **166, 168**
COLORS IN THE NINJA-OUTFIT RAINBOW: **3**

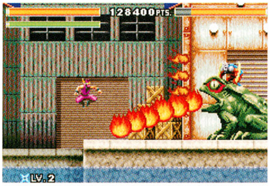


Always bring a grappling hook to a bank in order to reach the random balconies that are placed 20 feet above the floor.

For a game that was released in 2003, Ninja Five-O sure feels like it should have come out in 1989. That's not supposed to be a knock against the graphics or gameplay—in fact, it's a compliment of the highest order. At a time when games were striving for cinematic realism, it was a refreshing blast from the past to play a title that involved a government-employed ninja slashing up hijackers on an airplane and fighting a giant, fireball-throwing kabuki warrior.

The plot of Ninja Five-O is as simple (and ridiculous) as most other games from the 8- and 16-bit eras. An evil gang has taken over "the city" and is committing all sorts of crimes. With the normal police force overwhelmed, it's up to Joe Osugi, the precinct's resident ninja, to take command of the situation. Fairly ridiculous, right? It's one step up from "Are you a bad enough dude to rescue the president?" and we love it for that.

Although not terribly large, the game's stages are nonlinear, forcing you to do a bit of exploration. In each of them (minus the boss stages), you must rescue a set number of hostages and track down different colored keys to unlock the many doors throughout each level. To counter the criminal threat, Joe is armed with an unlimited supply of upgradeable shuriken (complete with a new outfit for each power level), a sword for close-quarters combat, and a limited supply of magic that can be used to wipe out all of the onscreen enemies or make you temporarily invincible.

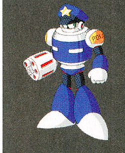


Joe's most valuable tool, though, and the one that adds an extra bit of technique to the game, is his grappling hook. This device allows you to grab overhead platforms and swing up onto them. Mastering the hook takes a bit of practice, but once you do, it's extremely satisfying to flip up and over an enemy thug who's patrolling a ledge and cut him down from behind.

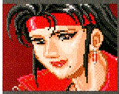
Given Joe's ninja skills and grappling hook, Ninja Five-O plays like a cross between Sega's original Shinobi title and Capcom's NES classic Bionic Commando. It's a remarkably fun game that holds up extremely well today. Unfortunately, the cartridge is also quite rare, making it hard to come by without shelling out a substantial chunk of cash. Still, Ninja Five-O is so good that it might just be worth it. —**PHIL T.**

LAYING DOWN THE LAW

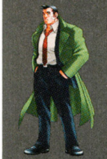
In Europe Ninja Five-O is known as Ninja Cop, a title that really reflects the game's late-'80s charm. When it comes to video game police officers, Joe Osugi is certainly one of the best, but he's not the only top cop out there. Here are a few more of our favorites.



FAKE MAN
Debuted In: ***Mega Man 9 (Wii)***
Don't call him RoboCop! Fake Man here is a villainous police robot designed by Dr. Wily in order to frame Mega Man's creator, Dr. Light.



BLAZE FIELDING
Debuted In: ***Streets of Rage (Genesis)***
Blaze quit the police force when her superiors refused to do anything about the growing crime wave. She hits the streets with her partners to dish out justice.



DICK GUMSHOE
Debuted In: ***Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (Nintendo DS)***
This jovial (and somewhat bumbling) homicide detective is always ready to lend an investigative hand to Phoenix Wright and Miles Edgeworth.

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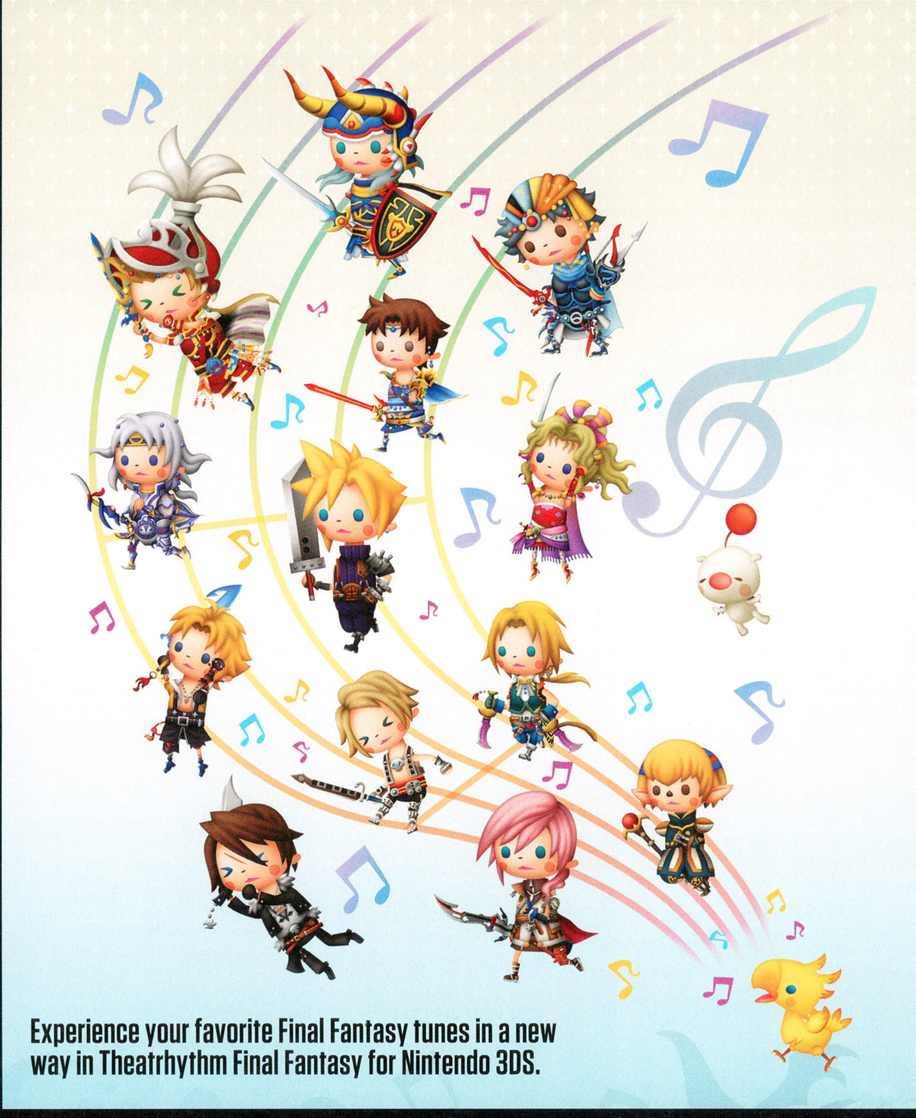
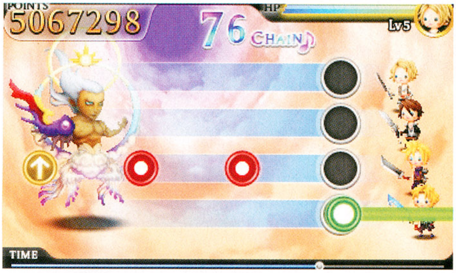
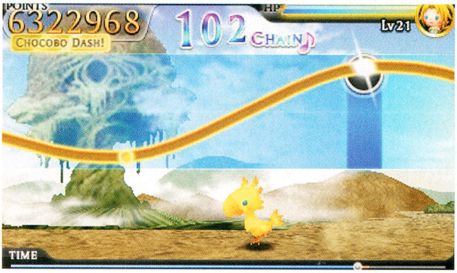
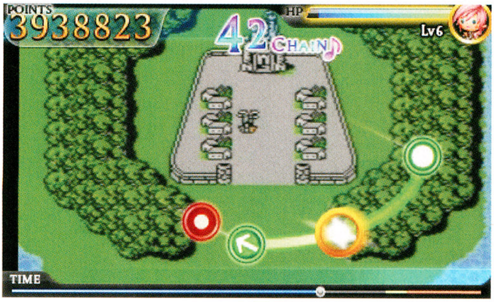


Experience your favorite Final Fantasy tunes in a new way in Theatrhythm Final Fantasy for Nintendo 3DS.







Melodies of Life

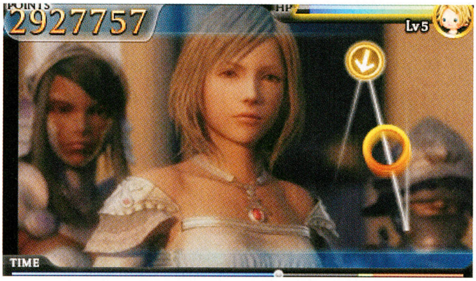
THEATRHYTHM FINAL FANTASY

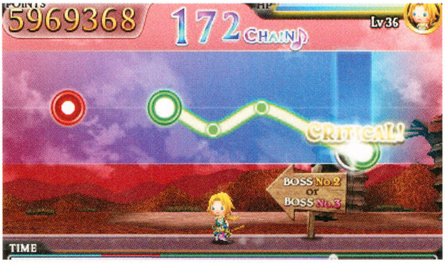
8.0 The amount of enjoyment you get out of Theatrhythm Final Fantasy will probably correlate directly to how big a fan you are of the Final Fantasy series. If you have fond memories of Celes putting on the show of a lifetime at the opera, Cloud and company facing off against Sephiroth, Squall and Rinoa dancing the night away at a school social, or Vaan and Penelo wandering the Giza Plains outside of Rabanastre, there's little that needs to be said—this celebration of Final Fantasy's Japanese 25th anniversary is a must-have. On the other hand, if Final Fantasy isn't really your thing, but you're a fan of rhythm games...well, there's a lot to like here, too.

The game's biggest strength is arguably its music. The first 13 mainline Final Fantasy games are featured from the get-go, allowing you to enjoy interactive versions of some of the finest music in RPG history, from the timeless "Main Theme" of the original Final Fantasy to "Battle with the Four Fiends" from FFIV to "Suteki Da Ne" from FFX, all presented in their original glory. Naturally, a few choices are questionable (the lackluster "Mi'ihen Highroad" from FFX made the cut, but "Not Alone" from FFIX—which seems perfect for a rhythm game—did not), and the low-fi 8-bit sounds of the early games might not please some players' eardrums, but overall it's a fantastic collection of tunes.

Theatrhythm also succeeds through plenty of variety. Each Final Fantasy game is represented by a field, a battle, and an event track (along with intro and ending songs that are essentially simplified bonus levels), and each type of tune features a different style of gameplay. The action always comes down to fun, traditional rhythm-game play mechanics—tapping, sliding, dragging, and pressing on the touch screen as visual cues overlap an indicator—but the differences between the three types of songs (which primarily relate to the number of rows of cues and the positioning of the timing indicator) keep things from becoming repetitive.

The difficulty curve is smooth enough that anyone, rhythmically inclined or not, should be able to play through the game and see the ending with relative ease—the trick lies in maximizing your score and nailing every beat with a perfectly timed "critical hit." But once you've conquered each set on its default difficulty, there are loads of




POINTS
5969368
172 CHAIN
HP
Lv36
CRITICAL!
BOSS No.2
or
BOSS No.3
TIME

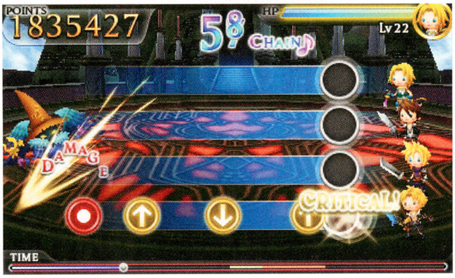
POINTS
5956478
95 CHAIN
HP
Lv7
TIME

opportunities for players who want more of a challenge. Unlockable "expert" and "ultimate" versions of each tune really ratchet up the pacing and intensity; it's in these later, optional portions of the game that rhythm-game enthusiasts will really be able to have a blast and show their stuff. This is doubly true for the tough-as-nails Dark Note mixes, which pair up field and battle tunes so you can experience them in new, rewarding, and often viciously difficult ways.

Hardcore FF supporters, in the meantime, will get to enjoy all the accoutrements that make Theatrhythm much more than a typical music game. You can choose a party of four characters from a stable of Final Fantasy stars (including several unlockables), equip items, level up by earning experience points, and more. All of this is fairly transparent and easily ignorable if you want to focus on just the core gameplay, but if you'd like to maximize the experience and tilt the odds in your favor to overcome the game's greatest challenges, it's a nice addition. Of course, there's plenty of bonus content to obtain, too.

POINTS
7589113
160 CHAIN
HP
Lv21
TIME

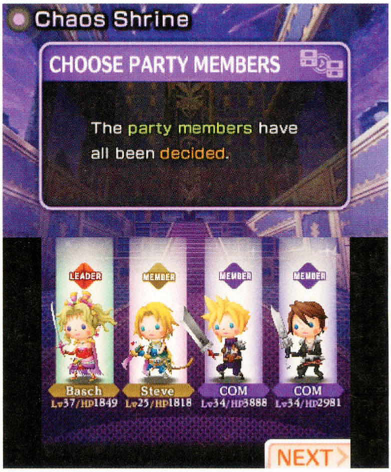
As good and deep as the game is, however, I do have a few complaints. The video footage that's shown during the event stages hasn't been localized for North America, causing the scenes—specifically those from the 8- and 16-bit titles—to lose some of their impact, and the game occasionally had trouble recognizing some direction-specific stylus swipes. And although Theatrhythm's replay value is commendable, the time investment required to see everything in the game borders on insane. Fortunately, these are pretty minor issues that hardly detract from the experience.


POINTS
1835427
58 CHAIN
HP
Lv22
DAMAGE
CRITICAL!
TIME

Overall, Theatrhythm Final Fantasy is an excellent effort thanks to an amazing soundtrack, solid gameplay, charming visuals, and an appropriately generous helping of nostalgia. If you like Final Fantasy or music games, Theatrhythm won't disappoint.

—CHRIS H.

N3DS PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **INDIESZERO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**



Chaos Shrine

CHOOSE PARTY MEMBERS

The party members have all been decided.

LEADER
MEMBER
MEMBER
MEMBER
Basch
Lv37/HP1849
Steve
Lv25/HP1818
COM
Lv34/HP3888
COM
Lv34/HP2981
NEXT

Banding Together

One of Theatrhythm Final Fantasy's more intriguing features is a co-op mode that allows up to four players to tackle the game's challenging Dark Notes as a team with a shared life bar. It sounds cool, especially since the mode enables you to earn some nifty rewards, but in practice it isn't anything special. Even though you're playing the same Dark Note as your friends, each player tackles the tracks separately, eliminating any feeling of unity; to be honest, you might as well be playing separate games. On the other hand, the ability to trade Dark Notes via StreetPass is a worthy inclusion.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT ANNOUNCED Wii U GAME ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

JUSTIN CHENG

I'm a huge fan of zombie-related games, movies, comics, etc., so I can't wait to dispatch the undead in ZombiU.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

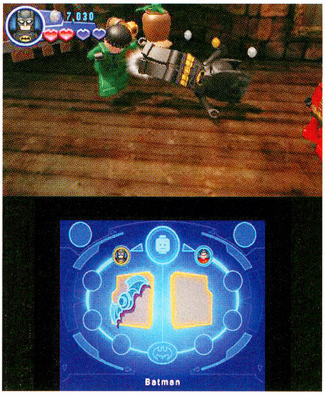
This is tough. I'm going to say Pikmin 3 for when I'm playing by my lonesome and Rayman Legends for when friends are around.

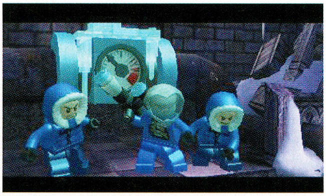
PHIL THEOBALD

The trailer for LEGO City: Undercover made that game look like all sorts of fun. I'm looking forward to playing a non-licensed LEGO game (and I hope they eventually create a game based on LEGO's space theme).

STEVE THOMASON

Justin stole my thunder, but I nonetheless have to go with ZombiU. Of all the Wii U games I played at E3, that was the one that best showcased what makes Nintendo's new system cool.





Block Buster

LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES

7.0

The most exciting aspect of LEGO Batman 2 is, of course, the ability to play as multiple heroes from the DC universe. One of the problems with the original LEGO Batman game was the fact that equipping Batman and Robin with a variety of different suits (each with its own unique abilities) wasn't as exciting as using a new character. Unlocking a stable of superpowered allies in this second outing adds a great amount of variety to the proceedings. It's especially fun playing as the insanely overpowered Superman.

Added characters aside, the gameplay is pretty much the same thing that we've seen time and again in the LEGO games, however. The simple action and light puzzle-solving is still enjoyable, but some of the stages do drag on a bit too long—not necessarily a good thing for a portable game. A noticeable improvement from the previous LEGO titles for N3DS is the presence to two playable characters on the screen at once. In the first game your partner was always waiting offscreen, but now he follows along next to you. It may seem like a small detail, but it helps this game feel more like its console big brother.

One slightly controversial aspect of LEGO Batman 2 is the addition of voices during the previously pantomimed cinema sequences. Happily, the voice acting works and it helps give the characters more life. The presence of Clancy Brown (who played Lex Luthor in the *Justice League* cartoon) certainly helps the dialogue feel more legitimate. The soundtrack provides further authenticity, lifting classic themes from the Batman and Superman films.

LEGO Batman 2 certainly doesn't innovate, but I had fun seeing what stages and superheroes I could unlock next. **—PHIL T.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS.**
DEVELOPER: **TT GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Off Target

BRAVE: THE VIDEO GAME

5.0

Brave: The Video Game, based on Pixar's latest opus, has you assuming the role of fiery-haired princess Merida, who embarks on a voyage to purge an evil corruptive force from a mythical version of Scotland. To accomplish this task, you must jump on platforms, solve puzzles, and shoot arrows at enemies. That last one is something you do a lot throughout this adventure. The motion-controlled melee combat is flawed, so the most effective way to defeat baddies is by playing the game like a twin-stick shooter—albeit a twin-stick shooter with sometimes-temperamental auto-aim. Swapping between four elements (fire, ice, wind, and earth) with which to imbue your arrows does add a layer of strategy to battles, but ultimately the combat—like almost every other facet of this game—is rather lackluster. **—JUSTIN C.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **BEHAVIOUR INTERACTIVE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

This is **Richard**. He knows it's his job to teach his son **Scotty** what this whole gaming thing is about. The age rating helps him **pick the right games**, but being a good dad means he always wants to know more.

That's exactly what the **ESRB's rating summaries** are for.

Search for a game's rating summary at **ESRB.org**.

Rich H.

Lafayette, IN

ESRB ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

EARLY CHILDHOOD eC · EVERYONE E · EVERYONE 10+ E10+ · TEEN T · MATURE 17+ M · ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO · CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Heroic Effort

HEROES OF RUIN

7.0 Perhaps it's because of the relatively recent release of Diablo III for PC, but I've found myself craving a loot-based action-RPG lately. It's fortunate for me that Square Enix and n-Space have had one called Heroes of Ruin in the works for a while (we first started talking about this title in Vol. 268). Even better, this game does a mostly good job of bringing the Diablo-style experience to the Nintendo 3DS system.

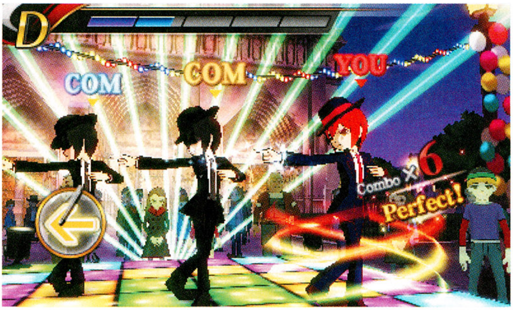
In the world of Veil there are creatures called Ruinlords, one of which is the sphinx Ataraxis, who has fallen under a curse. It's up to you—assuming the role of a sword-brandishing Vindicator, a pistol-packing Gunslinger, a magic-wielding Alchitect, or a fist-swinging Savage—to voyage to Ataraxis's city of Nexus and attempt to cure the Ruinlord. Despite having some (rather obvious) twists as the story reaches its conclusion, the narrative isn't particularly compelling. But it doesn't really have to be; this game is all about dispatching foes, leveling up, and acquiring loot so that you can defeat even stronger adversaries and continue the cycle. Unfortunately, the cycle can grow wearisome due in part to the seemingly endless quantity of enemies the game sometimes throws at you. This is great for earning experience, sure, but it makes exploring dungeons a slog. The tedium can be offset somewhat by the up-to-four-player drop-in/drop-out co-op, though, and we didn't experience any notable lag issues when testing both the local-wireless and online multiplayer. The same can't be said of the frame rate, however; it's less than solid online or off, single-player or multiplayer, especially when the 3D effect is enabled.

The main thing that surprised me about Heroes of Ruin was just how short the adventure is. After I beat the game the first time, the clock said it had taken me under six hours. Perhaps that's for the best, though, as this game fares much better when played in short bursts, a dungeon or two at a time, which is good pacing for a handheld title. Besides, Square Enix has ambitious postrelease plans, and has pledged to support the game for at least a year by offering challenges and items via SpotPass, as well as quests via the Heroes of Ruin community website. These features were not available at press time, but assuming Square Enix follows through with its promise, you don't have to be overly concerned about getting your money's worth should you decide to purchase this title. —**JUSTIN C.**

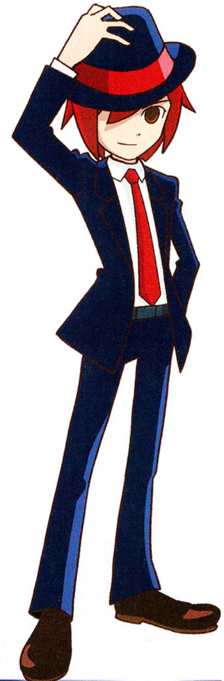
N3DS PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The multiplayer makes this game exponentially more enjoyable.

Enjoy a Sightseeing Tour of Paris with



Smooth Criminal

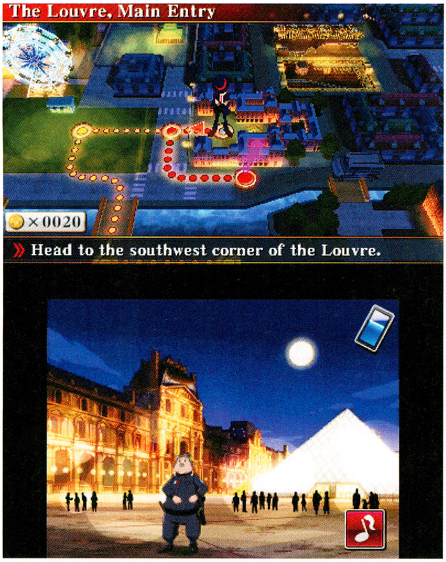


RHYTHM THIEF & THE EMPEROR'S TREASURE

8.0 Rhythm Thief reminds me why I've been a Sega fan for more than 20 years. Like so much of the company's output during the Saturn and Dreamcast days especially, it's earnest; the product of an obviously passionate creative team that somehow convinced the suits to leave them alone and let them realize their wonderfully quirky vision. Too few people are likely to appreciate it (another Sega hallmark, sadly), but that doesn't make the endeavor less worthwhile for those who do.

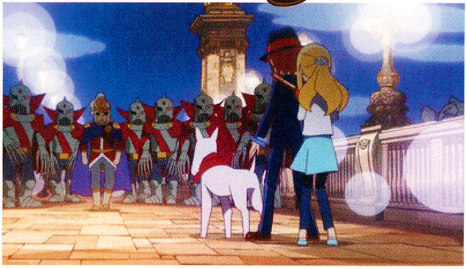
That's not to say the game is without flaws—far from it. But if you're the kind of player who shares in its developers' experimental spirit (and chances are good if your curiosity is piqued enough to read this review), I can almost guarantee that Rhythm Thief will bring a smile to your face. Perhaps best described as a musical caper, it stars a young art thief name Raphael—better known to his fellow Parisians as Phantom R—who's father recently went missing under mysterious circumstances. Raphael is determined to get to the bottom of his old man's disappearance, but those efforts lead him to cross paths with an apparently back-from-the-dead (and understandably cranky) Napoleon Bonaparte. The ensuing hijinks unfold as a wide variety of rhythm-based activities. Raphael sneaks into the Louvre, flees a roller-skate police brigade, engages in fisticuffs with a butler, poses as a short-order cook, and much, much more—all to the beat of some pretty infectious tunes.

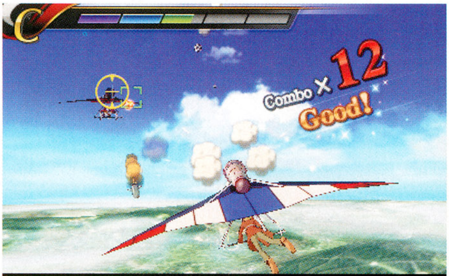
The gameplay itself is pretty standard genre fare, consisting primarily

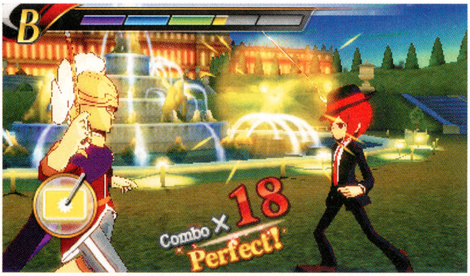

The Louvre, Main Entry

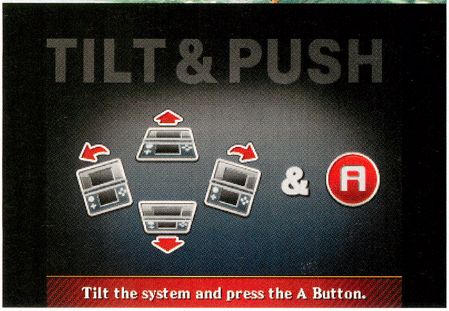
×0020

» Head to the southwest corner of the Louvre.





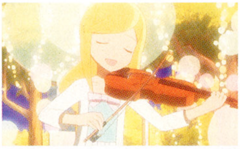


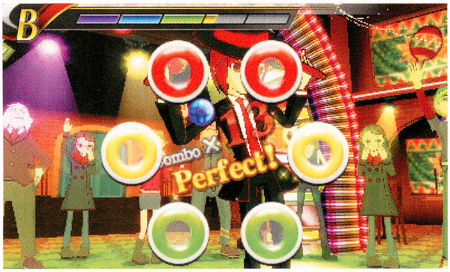


Tilt the system and press the A Button.

of button taps and touch-screen swipes. But the way it's packaged makes a big difference. The variety of tasks helps to keep things fresh, the cel-shaded art style has a cartoony charm, and the animation is fantastic. Plus, Phantom R is a cool protagonist—like the Pink Panther meets Michael Jackson. And fellow Sega fans will get a kick out of frequent nods to the company's history, including stages inspired by Samba de Amigo and Space Channel 5.

Of course, a rhythm game is only as good as its music, and in that regard Rhythm Thief excels. The vast majority of the soundtrack consists of upbeat original tracks that fit the caper theme like a glove and really help separate this from other titles in the genre. A couple of stages mix in classical arrangements while you simulate playing the violin as Raphael's friend Marie. Those ended up being some of my favorite and made me realize how awesome a Violin Hero game would be. But I digress.





Bridging the musical festivities are adventure elements vaguely reminiscent of Professor Layton. You'll explore Paris, chat with its citizens, and solve the occasional sound-based puzzle. The brainteasers aren't in the same league as Layton's—some involve little more than trial and error— but they're obviously not the main attraction here. Their job is to break up the pacing a bit, and they accomplish that task just fine. Besides, the game benefits the ol' grey matter in another way: as your travels lead to a number of Paris landmarks, quite a few historical facts manage to sneak their way into conversation. The next time you visit France's capital, that knowledge may earn you looks of mere *mild* disdain. (We kid the French!)

Despite the real-world setting, Rhythm Thief's story is pretty silly—mostly in a good way. It's often humorous, at times touching, and bolstered by some solid writing. Major events are portrayed through gorgeous stereoscopic 3D cut-scenes, which combine cel animation with CG components to stunning effect. I'm honestly sort of amazed that a game this niche had the budget for such lavishly produced cinematics. It's also fully voiced, though that aspect impresses less regularly. The performance for Raphael is particularly inconsistent, and some of the French accents border on ridiculous.

Perhaps my biggest gripe, however, is the way scoring works during rhythm stages. Your performance meter increases or decreases based on hitting the beats correctly, and the penalty for screwing up sometimes seems overly harsh. Many of the stages are quite long, and on more than a handful of occasions, I'd have a perfect run through the first 90% only to miss a few consecutive beats at the very end and fail. The difficulty can ramp up quite a bit toward the latter parts of a song, and it's tough to get the hang of those bits when failure comes so quickly.

Fortunately, most of the stages are so much fun that they mitigate the frustration. And with more than 50 of them in all, Rhythm Thief is pretty meaty for a game of its ilk. Hardcore completionists can spend upwards of 10 hours finishing the main story mode, which includes multiple epilogues that you unlock via optional tasks.

Given Sega's recent financial woes and drastic restructuring, I'm not sure how many more of these the company has in it. I guess all we can do is enjoy them while they last. **—STEVE T.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Crush 3D	7.0	Sega	275	E10+
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Dual Pen Sports	7.0	Namco Bandai	270	E10+
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Funky Barn 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	276	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
Kid Icarus: Uprising	9.5	Nintendo	277	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	275	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Mario Tennis Open	7.0	Nintendo	278	E
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	9.0	Konami	276	M
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
Order Up!!	6.5	UTV Ignition	275	E
Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions	7.0	Namco Bandai	269	E10+
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rayman Origins	8.5	Ubisoft	279	E10+
Reel Fishing Paradise 3D	6.0	Natsume	269	E
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	7.5	Capcom	269	M
Resident Evil: Revelations	9.0	Capcom	275	M
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	5.5	Atari	278	E
Shifting World	6.5	Aksys	277	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	7.0	Nintendo	277	T
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Tales of the Abyss	7.0	Namco Bandai	275	T
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	7.5	Namco Bandai	276	T
Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
Transformers: Dark of the Moon–Stealth Force Edition	4.0	Activision	270	E10+
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

MORE ON:

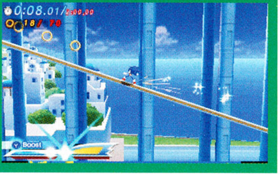
MARIO KART 7

There are few games that make me more competitive than the Mario Kart titles, especially when you're playing online multiplayer. Whether I'm excitedly snatching first place or angrily cursing my Nintendo 3DS, there's never a dull moment when playing the series's finest iteration with opponents from all over the world. Also, Nintendo recently released a patch for a glitch that allowed players to skip a huge chunk of the Maka Wuhu track. Take that, cheaters! —CODY M.

MORE ON:

SONIC GENERATIONS

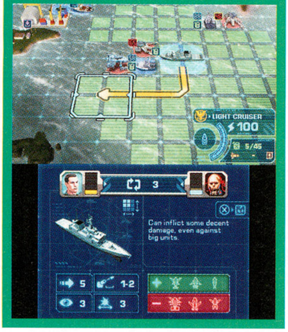
Man, Sega sure knows how to throw a birthday party! Not only does Sonic Generations feature a nearly perfect mix of speed and platforming, but the levels–all inspired by Sonic highlights from the past 20 years–are some of the most enjoyable in the entire series. Furthermore, the game will keep you playing well after the credits roll, thanks to 100 bonus missions and a bevy of unlockable goodies. If only all major game anniversaries were celebrated in such style.... —CHRIS H.



BATTLESHIP

I wasn't expecting much from Battleship—it is, after all, a licensed game based on a mediocre movie—but I was pleasantly surprised by this Advance Wars-style N3DS title. Sure, it's not as polished or as entertaining as Nintendo's strategy series, but Battleship is still worth checking out if you can find it for cheap.

—JUSTIN C.



Wii

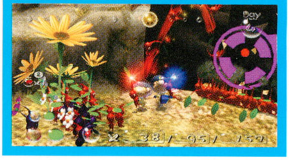
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
The Adventures of Tintin: The Game	5.5	Ubisoft	275	E10+
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T
Bit.Trip Complete	9.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.5	Sega	270	T
Cars 2: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	269	E10+
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion XL	6.0	Crave	274	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Disney Universe	4.5	Disney	273	E10+
Driver San Francisco	4.5	Ubisoft	271	T
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 12	8.0	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	7.5	Xseed	273	E
Fortune Street	7.5	Nintendo	274	E
Go Vacation	7.0	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.5	Nintendo	274	E10+
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Major League Baseball 2K12	2.5	2K Sports	277	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Party 9	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
Mystery Case Files: The Malgrave Incident	6.0	Nintendo	269	E
NASCAR 2011: The Game	3.0	Activision	269	E
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	5.5	Nintendo	276	E
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rhythm Heaven Fever	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	6.5	THQ	274	T
X-Men Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T
Xenoblade Chronicles	9.0	Nintendo	277	T

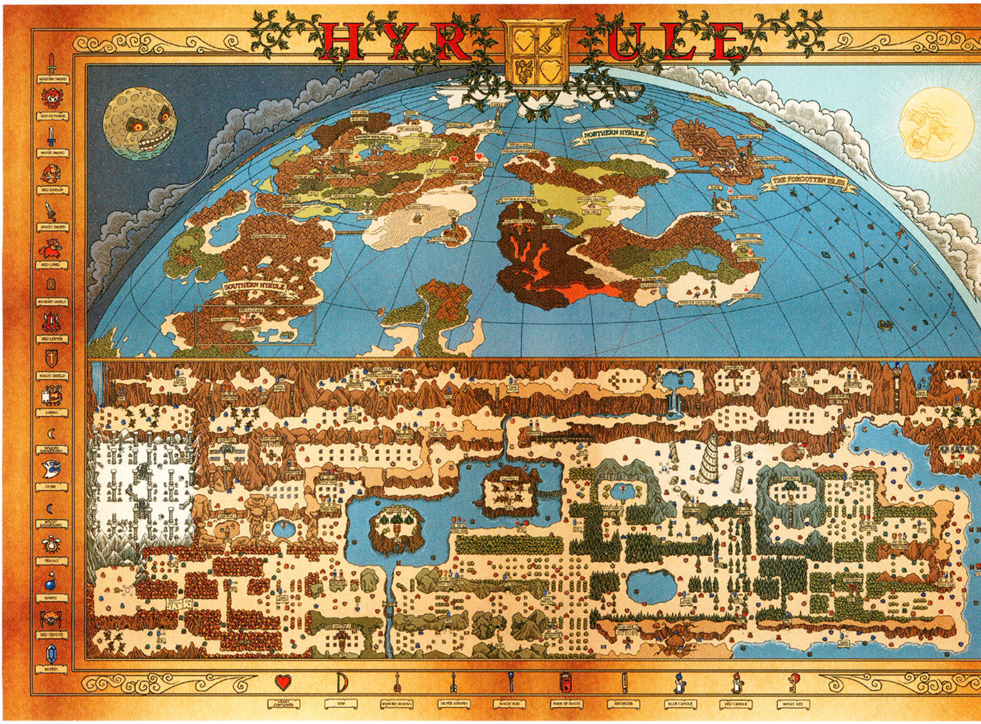
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	8.0	Sega	272	T
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	8.5	PopCap	274	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	3.5	Sega	270	E10+
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	8.0	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	3.5	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Conquest	9.0	Nintendo	279	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	8.0	Atlus	276	T
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Autobots/Decepticons	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

PIKMIN 2

I loved replaying the original Pikmin when it was rereleased for Wii with enhanced controls, and I was itching to play the similarly updated sequel. Although Japan and Europe got this wonderful game years ago, it was only recently released in North America. The graphics may not be as impressive as they were during the GameCube days, but Olimar's adventure is still engaging. And it will help tide me over until Pikmin 3 hits the Wii U console. **—PHIL T.**




HYRULE
NORTHERN HYRULE
SOUTHERN HYRULE
THE FORGOTTEN ISLES
WOODEN SWORD
RED OCTOROK
WHITE SWORD
RED MOBLIN
MAGIC SWORD
RED LYNEL
WOODEN SHIELD
RED LEEVER
MAGIC SHIELD
ARMOS
WOODEN BOOMERANG
GHINI
MAGIC BOOMERANG
PEAHAT
BOMBS
RED TEKTITE
RUPEES
HEART CONTAINER
BOW
WOODEN ARROWS
SILVER ARROWS
MAGIC ROD
BOOK OF MAGIC
RECORDER
BLUE CANDLE
RED CANDLE
MAGIC KEY

FANDOM

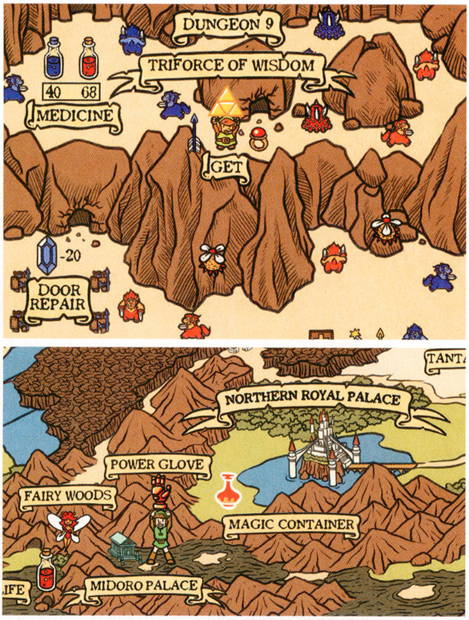
A Real-Life Tingle

In the skilled-map-maker sense, you understand

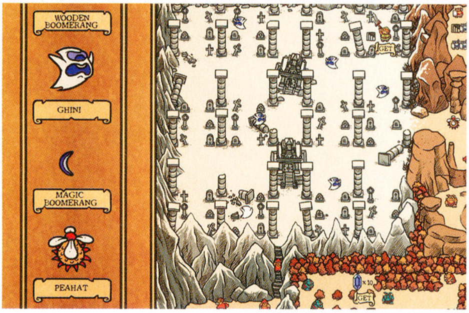
BILL MUDRON became a Nintendo fan when, at age 12, he played The Legend of Zelda for the first time at a friend's sleepover. The stack of hand-drawn maps that his friend and his friend's father had sketched out on graph paper as they worked their way through the game mesmerized him. As he puts it, "Seeing that stack of maps and clues was the kid equivalent of taking a peek at R.F. Scott's journal from his trip to the South Pole." It was then that he realized video games could "be an art form unto themselves." Even before he discovered his love of Nintendo games, however, Mudron developed a passion for art. He began drawing from the moment he could hold a crayon, and it's only natural that these two passions would overlap.

Mudron spent much of his childhood honing his art skills by copying maps and illustrations from video game magazines, and now, at age 36, he has taken his boyhood doodles to the next level with the creation of a gorgeous pair of maps that show off the landscape of Hyrule (from The Legend of Zelda series) and the Mushroom Kingdom (from the Mario series).

The Hyrule map was the first of the two. The inspiration for the project came when Mudron wanted to draw something to commemorate The Legend of


DUNGEON 9
TRIFORCE OF WISDOM
40 68
MEDICINE
GET
-20
DOOR REPAIR
TANTA
NORTHERN ROYAL PALACE
POWER GLOVE
FAIRY WOODS
MAGIC CONTAINER
MIDORO PALACE
IFE

[Above] Finding yourself lost in Hyrule? Need another Heart Container? A close look at Mudron's map reveals all of the land's treasures and palaces.


WOODEN BOOMERANG
GHINI
MAGIC BOOMERANG
PEAHAT
GET
×10
GET

Zelda's 25th anniversary in 2011. He describes the creative process thusly: "I couldn't think of an idea that encapsulated what I loved so much about that first game. Eventually I got to thinking about that sleepover where I first saw Legend of Zelda and my friend's box full of hand-drawn maps of Hyrule, and so I thought, 'why not just do that, but...big?'" At 24"×36", the final product was indeed big, and as it encompasses the overworlds of both The Legend of Zelda and Zelda II: The Adventure of Link (complete with locations of all enemies and hidden items), it's functional, too. Keen eyes will also notice The Wind Waker's Great Sea lurking in the upper-right corner of the map.

Designing the map was a two-month process that consumed hundreds of man-hours. Mudron spent the first month simply designing the map. Not until the

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Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones.

THIS MONTH'S THEME: SUNNY DAYS

VOLUME 278'S THEME: SPRING (THE SEASON)

PHOTOGRAPH FROM CONNOR B.

The Garden for
Mii & You

PHOTOGRAPH FROM FLIPSTAR

PIKMIN
Nintendo

PHOTOGRAPH FROM TOMMIE R.

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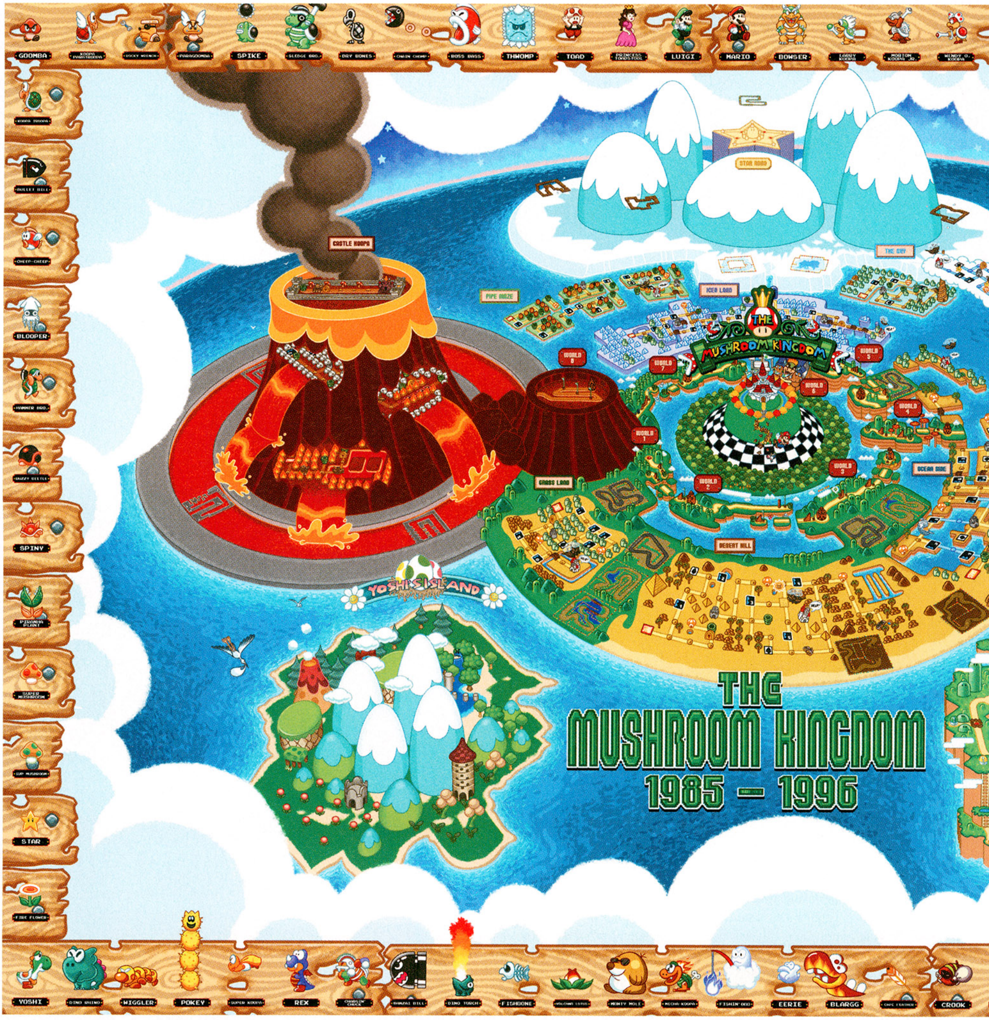
second month was he able to begin drawing, coloring, and labeling the piece. As for the tools he used, Mudron explains, " I work exclusively on a Cintiq drawing tablet with a copy of Photoshop. That lets me assemble bits of maps and in-game screenshots from all over the Web into a giant digital image, which I then use as the foundation of the map."

So how does one follow up such an ambitious undertaking? For a Nintendo fan, the next logical project would be a tribute to the beloved Mario series. Of course, the exploration-heavy Zelda titles have clearly defined maps, but how does one go about melding multiple platform games together to create a proper representation of the Mushroom Kingdom? This challenge is something Mudron welcomes: "My favorite part of drawing a map is trying to figure out how all the different pieces of the game world (or worlds) fit together. For the Mushroom Kingdom map, it took me weeks just to figure out how to arrange the world of Super Mario Bros. with the world of Super Mario Bros. 3. (I eventually decided to have them encircle each other, like a small donut nested inside a larger donut.)" Not content to stop at those two titles, Mudron also incorporated locations from Super Mario World, Super Mario RPG, Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island, and even Mario Kart into the Mushroom Kingdom map.

In addition to these elaborate maps, Mudron has created plenty

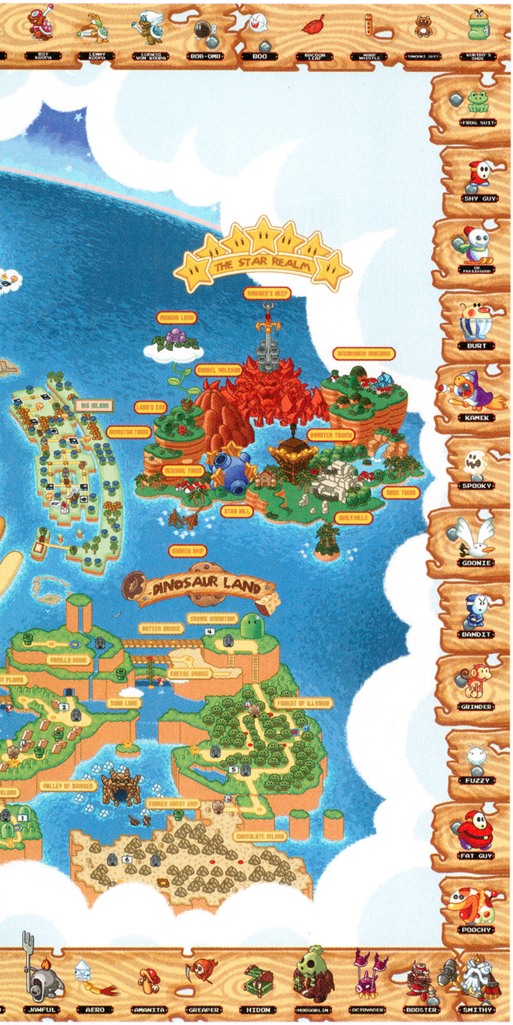

GOOMBA
KOOPA PARATROOPA
ROCKY WRENCH
PARAGOOMBA
SPIKE
SLEDGE BRO.
DRY BONES
CHAIN CHOMP
BOSS BASS
THWOMP
TOAD
PRINCESS TOADSTOOL
LUIGI
MARIO
BOWSER
LARRY KOOPA
MORTON KOOPA JR.
WENDY O. KOOPA
KOOPA TROOPA
BULLET BILL
CHEEP-CHEEP
BLOOPER
HAMMER BRO.
BUZZY BEETLE
SPINY
PIRANHA PLANT
SUPER MUSHROOM
1UP MUSHROOM
STAR
FIRE FLOWER
CASTLE KOOPA
STAR ROAD
THE SKY
PIPE MAZE
ICE LAND
THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM
WORLD 8
WORLD 7
WORLD 6
WORLD 5
WORLD 4
WORLD 3
WORLD 2
WORLD 1
GRASS LAND
OCEAN SIDE
DESERT HILL
YOSHI'S ISLAND
THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM
1985 – 1996
YOSHI
DINO RHINO
WIGGLER
POKEY
SUPER KOOPA
REX
CHARGIN' CHUCK
BANZAI BILL
DINO TORCH
FISHBONE
VOLCANO LOTUS
MONTY MOLE
MECHA-KOOPA
FISHIN' BOO
EERIE
BLARGG
CAPE FEATHER
CROOK

of non-map-based artwork. He tells us that his subjects "come from me just wanting to own cool stuff, and if I have an idea for something cool and see that no one else has done it yet, I'll just go ahead and draw it myself. No one's drawn a heartfelt homage/wallpaper for Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas? Well, now I know what I'm doing next week."

Still, he can't escape his love of Nintendo, so it's no surprise that he has created several homages to the company's various franchises. One of his favorite pieces is a tribute to Nintendo of America founder Minoru Arakawa and Nintendo Power icons Howard and Nester. (Mudron says that the Howard and Nester comics were a huge influence on him as a child.)

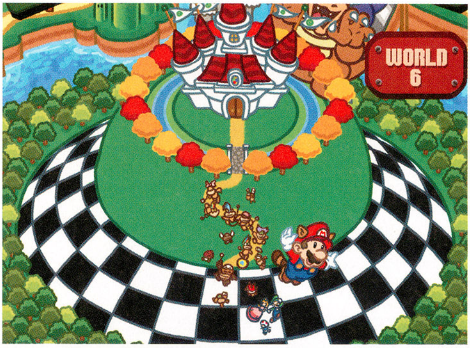
Currently, Mudron is working on a graphic novel that's tentatively titled *A Link to the Past: A History of Nintendo*. He is currently finishing up the script of the 200-page comic, and is planning to start drawing it this summer. In the meantime, he's already planning out his next map, which will be based on Konami's Castlevania series. Fans have requested maps for the Metroid and Mega Man series, so Mudron will not be lacking for inspiration in the future.

We asked Mudron if he had any advice for aspiring artists. His response: "Take as many life-drawing courses as possible if you want to draw character-based artwork. Gorge yourself on big fat art books from the library as often as possible. Collect images from artists you appreciate and see what it is about their artwork that you love so much, and then try to distill what appeals to you down to something you can absorb into your own unique style. And try not to work for free 'just to get your name out there'—that almost never works. Build a portfolio (either online or off) to show to friends, fellow artists, and potential clients. And really, never ever stop drawing. *Drawing is life*." You can check out Mudron's video game maps and his other artwork at his website, billmudron.com. —**PHIL T.**

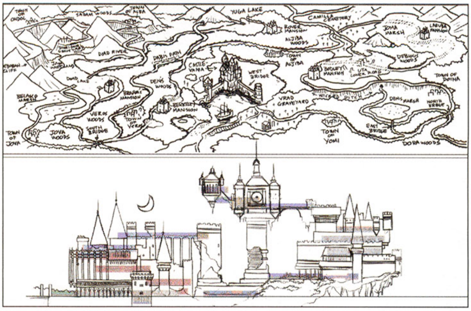

ROY KOOPA
LEMMY KOOPA
LUDWIG VON KOOPA
BOB-OMB
BOO
RACOON LEAF
WARP WHISTLE
TANOOKI SUIT
KURIBO'S SHOE
FROG SUIT
SHY GUY
DR. FREEZEGOOD
BURT
KAMEK
SPOOKY
GOONIE
BANDIT
GRINDER
FUZZY
FAT GUY
POOCHY
JAWFUL
AERO
AMANITA
GREAPER
HIDON
HOBGOBLIN
OCTOVADER
BOOSTER
SMITHY
THE STAR REALM
BOWSER'S KEEP
NIMBUS LAND
BARREL VOLCANO
MUSHROOM KINGDOM
BIG ISLAND
LAND'S END
BOOSTER TOWER
SEASIDE TOWN
ROSE TOWN
STAR HILL
MOLEVILLE
SUNKEN SHIP
DINOSAUR LAND
BUTTER BRIDGE
COOKIE MOUNTAIN
VANILLA DOME
CHEESE BRIDGE
SODA LAKE
FOREST OF ILLUSION
VALLEY OF BOWSER
SUNKEN GHOST SHIP
CHOCOLATE ISLAND

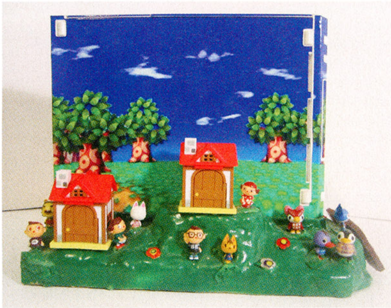
DESERT HILL
HELP!

GRASS LAND
HELP!



[Below] Before the beautiful, full-color maps are completed, they start as rough sketches like this version of Mudron's upcoming Castlevania piece.


TOWN OF ONDOL
SADAM WOODS
TOWN OF ALBA
YUGA LAKE
CAMILLA CEMETERY
ROVER MANSION
JOVA MARSH
LAURA MANSION
ALJIBA WOODS
DEAD RIVER
DABI'S PATH
TOWN OF ALJIBA
DEBIOUS WOODS
CASTLEVANIA
WEST BRIDGE
BODLEY MANSION
UTA LOWER ROAD
TOWN OF DOINA
DEAD LAKE
DENS WOODS
BRAHMS' MANSION
BELASCO MARSH
VRAD GRAVEYARD
WICKED DITCH
DENIS MARSH
NORTH BRIDGE
BERKELEY MANSION
VEROS WOODS
TOWN OF VEROS
SOUTH BRIDGE
TOWN OF JOVA
JOVA WOODS
TOWN OF YOMI
EAST BRIDGE
DORA WOODS



Welcome to Animal Crossing

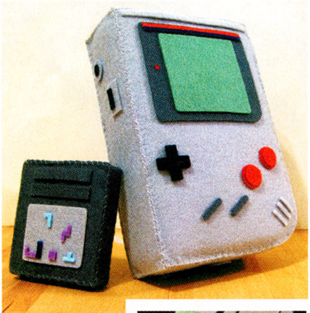
MOD JOB

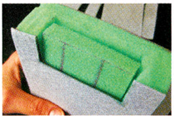
System Upgrade

City folk and country folk alike can marvel at this Animal Crossing tribute.

IT ISN'T UNUSUAL to see fancy decals applied to make players' systems more aesthetically pleasing, but we've gotta hand it to Maria Rivera of Kansas City, Missouri, for concocting this gussied-up Wii in tribute to Animal Crossing. Rivera says it's the first of its kind she's seen on the Internet. Even if there were another one out there, it probably wouldn't be as exhaustive, impressive, or as well executed as hers.

Rivera says she had to make this because of the personal attachment she feels to the game's characters. Using the Wii console's white space as a blank canvas, she overlaid a screenshot from the game to make a custom skin for the system. Then she molded clay around the original Wii stand and spray-painted it green to look like a grassy hill. Next she set out to find phone charms of Animal Crossing characters to populate that hill, and she admits it was "tedious work trying to collect them all!" Still, Rivera did it: she poured coins into capsule machines at a local anime shop to scoop up two different sets of the charms. The end result is a Wii console that's a veritable shrine to one of her favorite games. —**DAVID W.**





FANDOM

Portable Plush

Isn't that just the cutest cartridge you've ever seen?

CREATED FOR THE recent Super Button Mashers video game–themed art show at the OhNo!Doom gallery in Chicago, this fabulous plush Game Boy with accompanying Tetris cartridge comes from Steff Bomb, a 29-year-old artist best known for her adorable plush characters based on food. She says the decision was an easy one.

"My Game Boy was technically the first boy I ever had a crush on," she admits. "I would take my Game Boy with me everywhere and play Tetris until my eyeballs would melt out of my skull. For me, sewing the Game Boy with the removable Tetris cartridge was a no-brainer."

Steff spent just over two weeks putting it together, starting by envisioning the entire project. "Sometimes instead of sleeping, I'll lay awake and think about how to sew things from start to finish," she explains, adding that she once did the same with Tetris strategies. Though she's made a career out of plush-creation after teaching herself to sew eight years ago, a project like this requires considerable effort—and once she'd created a pattern on cardstock, she had numerous foam and felt pieces to sew together to create its authentic, final form.

The plush Game Boy was one of the true highlights of the show—and hopefully not the last gaming creation we see from Steff. She has a fantastic idea to make eggs from Adventure Island that "break open" to reveal plush skateboards, axes, and "weird bee fairies." —**ANDREW H.**

FANDOM

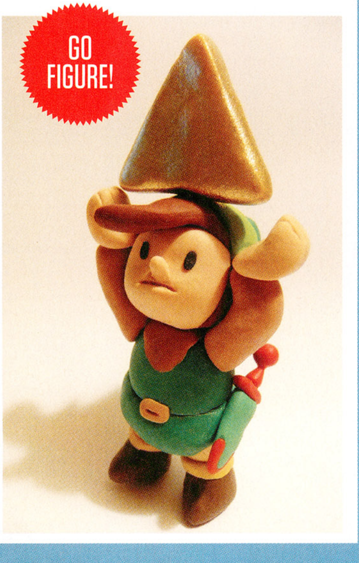
The Legend of Clay Link

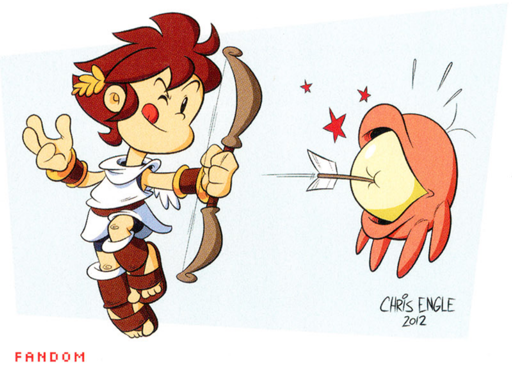
A UK fan sculpts the Hyrulean hero in a remarkably simple fashion.

OVER THE YEARS, Link from The Legend Of Zelda has been rendered in innumerable forms, both in his games and by his fans. Donna Evans from Manchester, United Kingdom, has been drawing Zelda fan art since 2003 and has now sculpted a tribute to the iconic character. This Sculpey clay sculpture, which took about four hours to make, is striking in both its simplicity and its ability to capture the childlike wonder many of us felt when we snagged our first piece of the Triforce.

When asked why Link can be portrayed in so many different styles while still retaining his core characteristics, Evans suggests it's "probably because he's so charismatic. There are so many emotions Link is able to portray in the games without even saying a word.... You love him in whatever shape or form."

This form is particularly eye-catching. Part of that is likely due to the use of FIMO polymer clay in the Triforce piece itself, which, hoisted above Link's head, shines with surprising luster. Evans painted the FIMO powder onto the unbaked clay base. When it all came out of the oven, presto—she had this work of art. **—DAVID W.**





FANDOM

Pit-ure Perfect

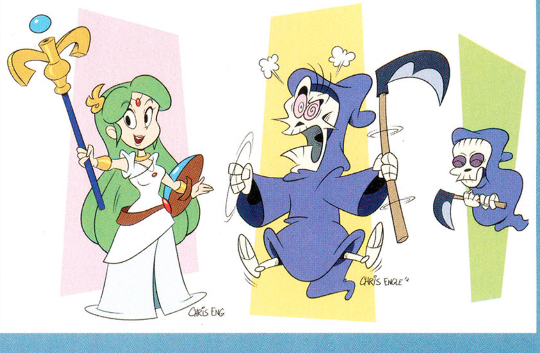
Pit and Palutena of Kid Icarus fame get a classic-cartoon makeover.

WITH THE RELEASE of Kid Icarus: Uprising earlier this year, the cast of Nintendo's Greek-mythology-inspired franchise, led by the cherub Pit, has been thrust back into the limelight. Not only have gamers been seeing more of them, but artistic fans have been inspired to deliver their own unique takes on the character—folks such as Baytown, Texas, resident Christopher Engle, who submitted his versions of Pit and Palutena for your viewing pleasure.

"Classic cartoon shorts, such as Looney Tunes and Tom & Jerry, have been my greatest influence since the age of three," Engle tells us, and you can certainly see those influences in his designs, including one in which Pit is "giving a Monoeye what-for."

Engle shares that "The Super Mario Bros. series, with its simple and colorful character designs" has inspired his work, as well, though he's "also quite fond of the varying artwork of games from the Zelda series, like the cartoonish character in Wind Waker and the watercolor style of Skyward Sword."

When he's not drawing his favorite Nintendo characters, Engle is working on games. He's been involved with several retro-inspired favorites from WayForward, including Mighty Milky Way, Mighty Switch Force, and Shantae: Risky's Revenge. **—RANDY N.**



AUGUST 2012 VOL. 281

NEXT MONTH

To help you make it through the dog days of summer, we'll review the season's hottest games, including Kingdom Hearts 3D and The Last Story. We'll also have lots more on upcoming Wii U titles and take a closer look at some of the year's most anticipated N3DS offerings. So grab an ice-cold beverage and we'll see you in 30!

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